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editor's letter

> Architecture can be a reflection of a group's culture and history.

Welcome!

In one of my favorite TED Talks, James Howard Kunstler says, "The public realm in America has two roles: It is the dwelling place of our civilization and our civic life, and it is the physical manifestation of the common good."

Kunstler has a propensity to confront us with the gloom and doom of poor design. No matter how confrontational he becomes, he is absolutely correct about the many roles architecture plays in shaping the dwelling place of the greater community. Architecture can be a reflection of a group's culture and history, providing a unifying identity to an area. It can be the infrastructure that connects people and places, or simply provide the space for people to come together. It can become the artifact left behind for future generations to adapt, recycle, reuse or destruct (hopefully we avoid the latter).

From a new community hub to a pair of renovations that made it through seemingly impossible odds, the architecture featured in this issue are physical manifestations of the common good. They artfully complete their civic duty to the communities they serve and will do so for years to come.

If you have 20 minutes to spare and enjoy a good confrontation, I invite you to watch Kunstler's TED Talk here: ***www.ted.com/talks/james_howard_kunstler_dissects_suburbia.html.***

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Editor, Iowa Architect

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contents

IOWA ARCHITECT MAGAZINE FALL 2013

^ *Principal Riverwalk Hub Spot, p. 20*

Features

20 **Hub of Activity**
The Principal Riverwalk Hub Spot manifested a large and unique set of challenges.

24 **Emblematic Evolution**
An effort to keep some things the same.

26 **Play it Again**
The rise, fall and revival of the iconic Paramount Theatre in Cedar Rapids.

32 **Safe Room**
An interesting touch makes the Giovannetti Shelter more than just a shelter.

34 **Crossroads**
An arsonist tried, and failed, to rip the architectural heart out of Stuart.

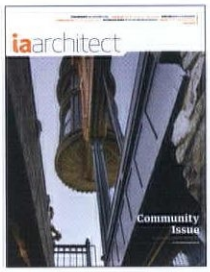
38 **River Renaissance**
RiverLoop Amphitheatre reconnects Waterloo to the Cedar River.

Departments

07 **Collected**
ISU Design-Build Studio creates pavilion; AIA Disaster Response Guide; 6th Avenue Corridor; ISU students win national competition; LEEDing West Des Moines.

14 **Profile**
Thomas Leslie, AIA, 2013 Rome Prize Fellow and Pickard Chilton Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University.

17 **On the Boards**
Lowe Park Amphitheater in Marion; New Bohemia City Station in Cedar Rapids; Des Moines Community Playhouse.



ON THE COVER
The 1896 E.E. Warren Opera House, with its copper turret, garners much of the attention on the square in Greenfield.
Emblematic Evolution, p. 24

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ISU Design-Build Studio Creates Pavilion

WORDS AND IMAGES: GABRIEL COMSTOCK, ASSOC. AIA

Every spring, ISU Architecture Professor Bruce Bassler hosts a Design-Build Studio to solve a community building need. This year, 26 interdisciplinary students majoring in architecture, interior design and landscape architecture collaborated with the City of Urbandale to design and construct a distinctive pavilion at Lakeview Park near Urbandale Middle School.

The students worked closely with the municipality's budget to re-imagine and create a distinctive space using form and materials that would be resilient to climate and public use as well as attractive and thoughtfully detailed. A formal design proposal that included conceptual ideology, digital animation and material and program feasibility was presented and discussed at a public City Council meeting.

The pavilion is a response to the neighborhood's need for a recreational open-air shelter capable of accommodating the park's scenic waterfront setting—a generic pole-type shelter once stood near the site but was destroyed in a windstorm. The Urbandale Parks and Recreation Department cleared the remaining concrete pad of tables and seating, which relegated the open slab to the messy, unfriendly interests of migrating geese, keeping residents away. One of the studio's primary research objectives was to identify feasible design interventions that would reduce the established goose population at the pavilion site while drawing residents back to reclaim and occupy the charming vista.

Tall grasses were planted to break goose-height sightlines and nestle the grid-based structure orderly into the naturalized landscape. Alternating-height, galvanized-steel bents mimic the fluidity of the lake's surface and are spanned by fluted Lexan sheets to temper direct sun but let plenty of daylight into the structure while sheltering from rain, sleet and snow. The open-flanged beam ends were left open to act as structural conductor heads for large downpours of rain. Sustainably harvested Tigerwood—a densely grained, rigid hardwood—makes up the wall and roof lattice. Carefully considered slat spacing provides airflow and visual security while making potential graffiti cleanup a snap, and also prevents small children from getting a foothold for climbing.

Tables and seating are all hand-fabricated from raw iron and permanently bolted to the slab. Several concrete seats were placed just outside the overhang for immediate parkscape sitting and are stable enough to be played on. A custom grilling station was placed on the typically downwind side of the structure, keeping smoke away from picnickers, and fitted with a solid plate for griddling pizza or pancakes as well as burgers and brats.

During the inclusive construction process, residents and city representatives visited with the students and enjoyed being part of the effort. For a detailed accounting of the project, including images, dialogue and video, please visit: ***www.lakeviewpavilion.wordpress.com.***

AIA Disaster Response Guide:

How Local Chapters Can Help Rebuild More Resilient Communities

WORDS: ANNA SCHWENNSEN JONES, ASSOC. AIA

As a group of architecture, urban design and planning professionals, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) maintains a commitment to the design and development of quality communities and to understanding the impact of built environments on society today and in the future. Environments are built on a diverse land that is prone to floods, fire, erosion, hurricanes, tsunamis and tornados.

When communities are damaged or destroyed, architects are crucial players in determining how these communities are re-imagined and rebuilt. Through a collaborative process with locals, architects can help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. They can lead a movement in resilient design and help communities envision a positive future.

The AIA Central States Region has created a Disaster Response Guide that outlines an approach any local chapter may use to engage its community in preparedness for and after a disaster. The full documents are available online at www.aiacsrep.org/#/disaster-assistance-guides/4578570931. The guide outlines what steps should be taken by architects to assist in the successful rebuilding of a community and how processes should occur.

The case study document shows how the design profession can give back to a region in need and how, through interaction with the community individuals and leaders, design can be used as a tool to positively shape the future of a community.

It is central that architects become a part of the community now, before disaster occurs. Using design as their tool, architects can enhance the sustainable culture of a place and build the type of community the public asks for. So, architects, ask, "What can the AIA do to help your community?" Then listen, help, do.

Documents and guides prepared for the AIA and the AIA Central States Region by Gunnar Hand, AICP, and MOCK Studio LLC.

STEP 1

Be Prepared

- Engage with local disaster response personnel now, before disaster strikes.
- Develop a disaster response protocol.
- Create a network of members to call on for assistance.

STEP 2

Respond Quickly

- Contact a disaster agency and offer your immediate support.
- Activate your network in partnership with emergency personnel to assist your community. Early response and engagement creates credibility and trust with the affected community, and also allows the AIA to become part of the visioning and rebuilding process from the beginning.

STEP 3

Lead Boldly

- Local architects are the experts on their communities and should lead the way.
- Local architects should look to local chapters; local chapters should look to state leaders; state components should look to regional components (i.e., Central States Region) and regional components should look to national.
- Rather than relying solely on the executive director or other AIA staff, consider the creation of a committee to provide additional support to the chapter.

STEP 4

Engage the Community

- Reach out and set up meetings with local government, chambers of commerce, state agencies and federal response units.
- Collaborate with city and regional planners, engineers, landscape architects and the larger design community to assist in the process. Work together!
- Help the community think big about its future, work out its immediate needs, mitigate or prevent future disasters and make communities more livable and sustainable in the process.

STEP 5

Provide Your Expertise

- Help the local community and government create a vision for their community's future.
- Work with FEMA and the local community to educate on how the design of the community can make their lives better. This may include a design charette, design workshop, community outreach event, education program about architects or disaster response training.

STEP 6

Document the Process

- Through the documentation of the grassroots efforts led by the AIA Springfield after the 2011 Joplin, Mo., tornado, a case study on how chapters can be more prepared when disaster strikes their communities is available to us all. This document compiles how the people of Joplin pulled themselves up and how the AIA helped them shape their future community. The case study describes:
  - The parties and leaders involved
  - How a local AIA chapter (AIA Springfield—an all-volunteer chapter) responded
  - How the architects networked with the community and asked leaders where and how they could help
  - How strategizing to build safer and more sustainable buildings occurred
  - How the design charette was conceived as the appropriate tool
  - How the design charette was planned
  - How the design processes occurred, including charette drawings and diagrams
  - Lessons learned and lessons to share

6th Avenue Corridor: An Organizational Profile

WORDS: LAURA PETERS AND BREANN BYE
IMAGES: BNIM ARCHITECTS, 6TH AVENUE CORRIDOR

Located in perhaps Iowa's most ethnically and racially diverse area, the 6th Avenue Corridor is striving to coordinate the commercial revitalization of 6th Avenue through the heart of Des Moines' inner city. This ambitious nonprofit was founded in 2009, and is designated an Urban Neighborhood Main Street Program through the Iowa Economic Development Authority. To facilitate the revitalization of the area, the 6th Avenue Corridor focuses on streetscape enhancements and beautification, commercial (re)development and historical preservation.

The 6th Avenue Corridor was originally established to spearhead efforts to re-imagine the 6th Avenue streetscape, a process that had floundered since first initiated in the 1990s. In partnership with the City of Des Moines, a conceptual plan was developed in 2012 for the 1.2-mile corridor, which forms the northern gateway to Des Moines' downtown district. Furthering this plan, Des Moines was selected last fall to participate in the EPA's Greening America's Capitals Program. In April 2013, a team of designers and consultants met with city leadership, area residents and local stakeholders to identify opportunities for infusing the streetscape design with "green" infrastructure elements. A report of that session will be released soon.

The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation (GDMPAF) has also been an instrumental partner in development of the streetscape plan, providing funding for an initial study of the integration of public art into the streetscape improvements for 6th Avenue. This completed report, "Un Nuevo Amanecer: Defining Place on 6th Avenue, Weaving Together Diverse Voices through Public Art," outlines an "art-in-transit" approach for this important transportation corridor. In a separate yet related project, the GDMPAF board has committed to funding an art installation across the 6th Avenue bridge over the Des Moines River and is working in partnership with the City and Iowa Department of Transportation on the project. The selected artist and concept will be announced in the coming months.

Commercial redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties is also a priority for the 6th Avenue Corridor. To build upon the efforts of the Neighborhood Development Corporation to rehabilitate and redevelop the historical Wherry Building at 6th and College avenues (completed in 2005), the organization is actively working with the City, property owners, partner organizations and designers to explore further redevelopment opportunities. Of particular focus is the former North Des Moines City Hall. Constructed in 1889 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is the only known public building standing to have survived the critical Annexation Movement in Des Moines during the late 19th century. Overall, the district boasts 15 properties on the National Register, and the 6th Avenue Corridor is building relationships with property owners to encourage historically sensitive rehabilitation and renovation.

More information about the organization and its efforts can be obtained at *www.6thavedsm.org*.

Before and after Image rendering (top) of potential streetscape and redevelopment improvements at the intersection of 6th and Forest avenues.

Iowa Students ACE It!

WORDS: MICHAEL BECHTEL, ASSOC. AIA
IMAGES: ACE MENTORS

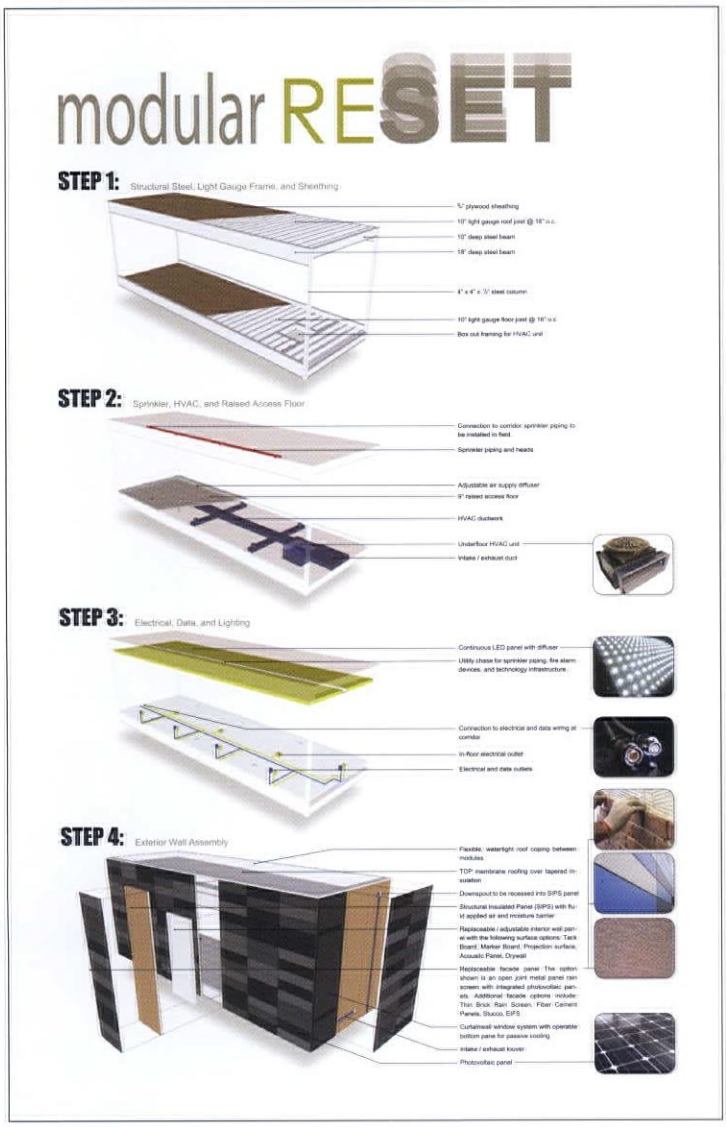
ACE? Sounds like something Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh used to yell across the net on their way to toppling yet another pair of victims. Interestingly enough, "ace" is exactly what our ACE (Architecture Construction Engineering) mentorship program did to win the national competition this year. They won! We won! Iowa won! Take that, nation. The Midwest strikes again, and on our Central Iowa chapter's first foray into such an event. The win was nice—five large, nice. No, strike that. Popular culture tells us the purse is the reward, but when you talk with the team members who devoted their personal time to one another for over 20 weeks (yes, that's almost half a year), you find an alternative viewpoint of what "reward" really means.

Commitment, devotion, loyalty and grit—sounds like the start of a pledge. These words are the gifts the hand-selected mentors and high school students gave to one another throughout the course of the program. "We joked, with smirks on our faces, what happens if we win," remembered Josh Ridgely, AIA, mentorship team lead.

Indeed, that was the question they were forced to answer when, one month after their submission, the call came down from D.C. (yes, the capital). In a flash, 43 entries were reduced to just three. Jokes became real issues. They knew they won something, but what? National (the Construction Industry Roundtable, aka CIRT) was slow with details. Faced with uncertainty, the team sprung back into action, organizing weekly sessions and inviting outside critiques to help hone their impending presentation. News trickled in from National: travel expenses would be covered for only one student and one mentor, crushing news for this tight-knit group.

"It wasn't an option. Everyone had worked tirelessly. Everyone must have the opportunity to go," recalled mentor Mike Dean, Assoc. AIA. Dave Unick, AIA, ACE board chair, put together a fundraising campaign so quickly it would make Super PACs freak. Suddenly, all expenses were covered. Cool, huh? Chaperoning and traveling with teenagers is easy—not. Parent meetings, the creation of policies, procedures, consent forms and medical releases ensued. Who would have initially thought these were necessary when volunteering?

Finally, the moment arrived. Five cross-disciplinary professional mentors and eight high school students—who started the project five months earlier in an after-school program designed to introduce the students to architecture, construction and engineering—waited in a room of the National Building Museum for 45 minutes. It was time. Joseph Bahnsen, selected by his teammates, presented the team's solution to the challenge of modular classroom design. Whisked off to a nice, quiet reception while the jury of industry CEOs deliberated, they waited. Back to hear the findings, third place was announced first—not Iowa. The jury then delivered the winning announcement: "The obvious winner is Iowa!" The team was excited and surprised; they had



Hard at work *(opposite)* the ACE student team at work. *(Above)* Part of the winning modular classroom design, and the team displaying their winning check.

always thought it was a close competition. That's the Midwest way, that's Iowa—humble to the core. Most important to the team was not that they won, but that they were all together.

There's no denying that money makes the world go round, and without fundraising this would be a different story, but ultimately the giving of one's self, the experiences, relationships and community building are the true takeaways. They say it takes an army sometimes, and this is no different. Just look at the people and groups that helped these eight high school students create a lasting memory that may very well shape the rest of their lives:

STUDENTS:

Joseph Bahnsen, *Des Moines, East High School*
Nicole Bramow, *Ankeny High School*
Eric Cole, *SE Polk High School*
Jordan Hutton, *West Des Moines, Valley High School*
Ross Nickey, *Des Moines, Abraham Lincoln High School*
Sirina Reed, *Ankeny High School*
Katie Smithart, *SE Polk High School*
Saketh Undurty, *West Des Moines, Valley High School*

MENTORS:

Josh Ridgely, *AIA, SVPA Architects Inc. (architecture, team leader)*
Mike Dean, *Assoc. AIA, INVISION (architecture)*
Jonathan Vaage, *Charles Saul Engineering (structural)*
Brant Bristow, *Tometich Engineering (structural)*
Stacie Ellickson-Hastie, *Confluence (landscape architecture)*

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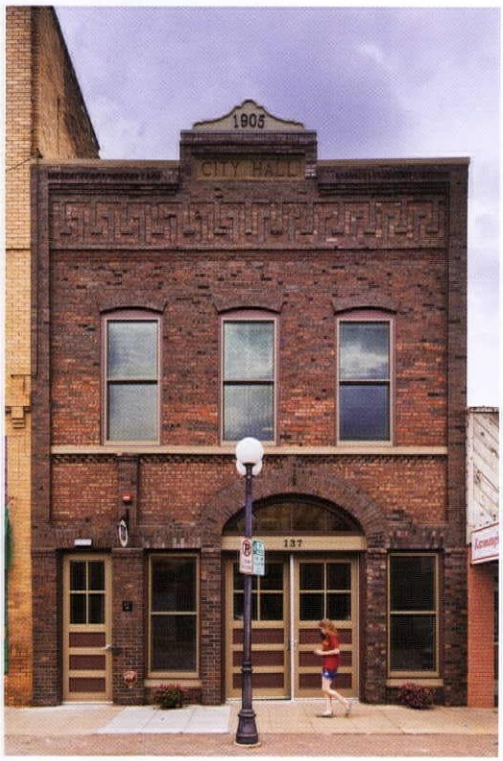
Matt Coen, AIA, *Walker Coen Lorentzen Architecture*
BJ Frideres, *The Weitz Company*
Curtis Ehler, AIA, *CEL Studio, LLC*

Old and new After a much needed facelift, existing materials shine throughout the building. *(Below)* Photovoltaic panels were strategically placed to protect the building's historical appearance. The connection between the hallway and original staircase provide abundant natural light. *(Bottom left)* Exterior repairs brought back the façade's original design.



LEEDing the Community

WORDS: LINDA SCHEMMEL, AIA, AND MICHELLE SACCO, ASSOC. AIA **IMAGES:** DIMENSION IMAGES

What happens when multiple people set out on a project with the same passionate goals? A successful project, such as the Historic City Hall in West Des Moines comes to fruition. Built in 1905, this building is one of the strongest visible reminders of where Historic Valley Junction, the birthplace of West Des Moines, began. The 3,132-square-foot structure housed the fire department, city jail and city council chambers. Until 1952, it was where many decisions were made that affected the future of the community. By rehabilitating it into a model of sustainable design, city leaders were ensuring that the role of the building would continue to play an important part in the community as well as the city's culture.

The rehabilitation included geothermal wells, photovoltaic panels and an efficient mechanical system offering huge energy savings: Its first energy bill was for $30.54.

Throughout the building, one can see the efforts taken to reuse and retain its historical fabric. Tin ceiling tiles were kept when possible, old windows were used as decorative pieces, the original fire station doors and transom window were reinstalled on the second floor. Perhaps most noticeable is the green roof that can be enjoyed from the upper patio.

This small but sustainable building is an example of what can happen when independent parties share a common goal of achieving something special for a community. In spring 2013, the West Des Moines Historic City Hall became one of few buildings in the country to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places with LEED Platinum certification.

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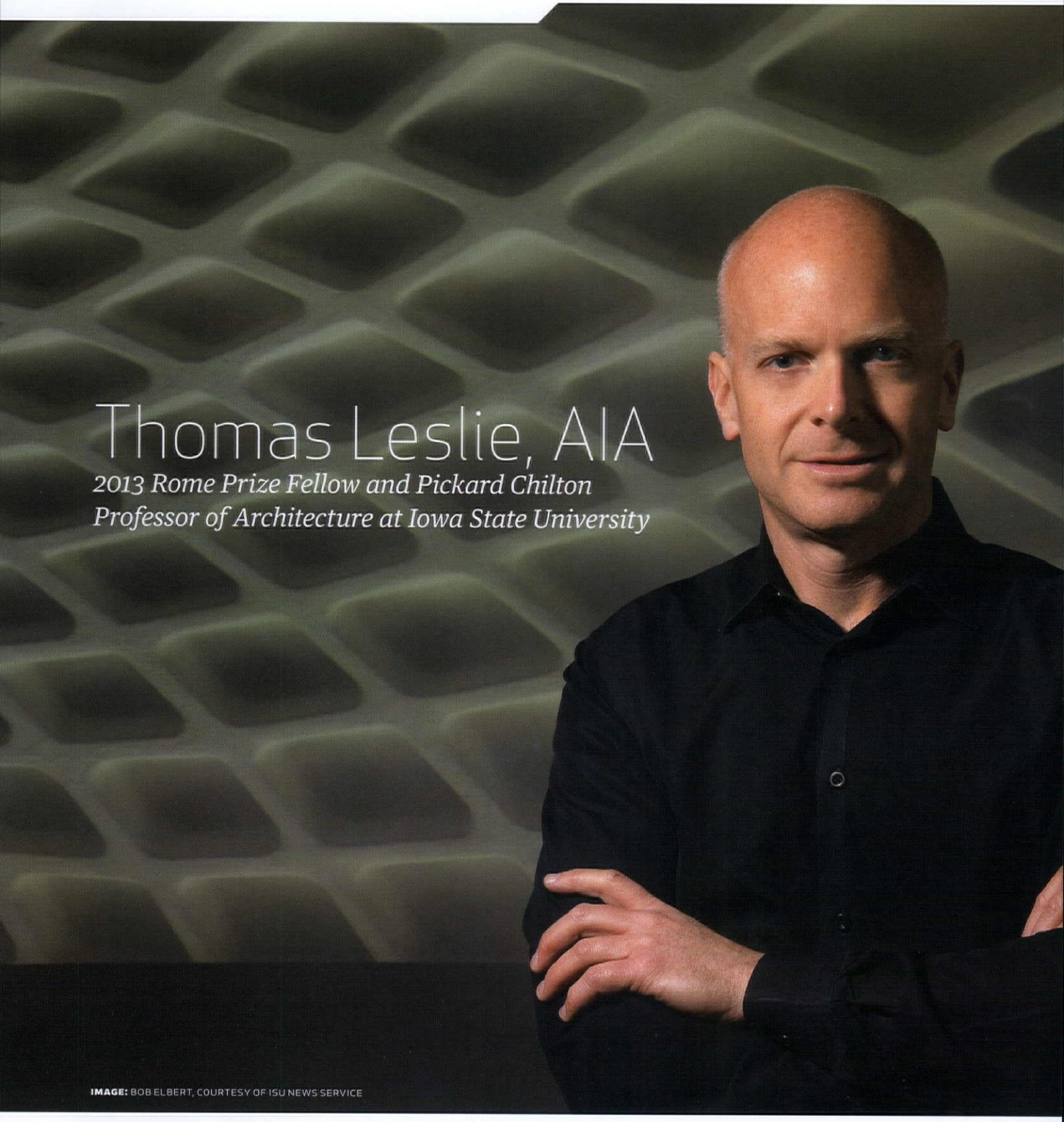


Thomas Leslie, AIA

2013 Rome Prize Fellow and Pickard Chilton Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University

IMAGE: BOB ELBERT, COURTESY OF ISU NEWS SERVICE

Thomas Leslie, AIA, has won a 2013 Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. In September, he will arrive in Italy for a six-month fellowship to document, analyze and advocate for the preservation of works by Pier Luigi Nervi, a post-war Italian engineer and architect. Nervi was a technical master of reinforced concrete, resulting in a dynamic interplay of engineering and aesthetics.

Prior to Professor Leslie's departure, *Iowa Architect's* Brad Davison-Rippey, AIA, took a moment to ask him a few questions:

How does it feel to join the ranks of Kahn, Meier, Graves, Lin and other architects who inspire you and your students?

It's mind-blowing. I think back to my research on Kahn and how often he talked about his later career beginning in Rome, and I can't help but be inspired and a little intimidated. What's even more incredible, though, is the group that I'll be going with—they range from archaeologists to composers, and everyone is doing something that sounds amazing. More than anything, I'm looking forward to the dinner conversations about one another's work.

What drove you to research Nervi?

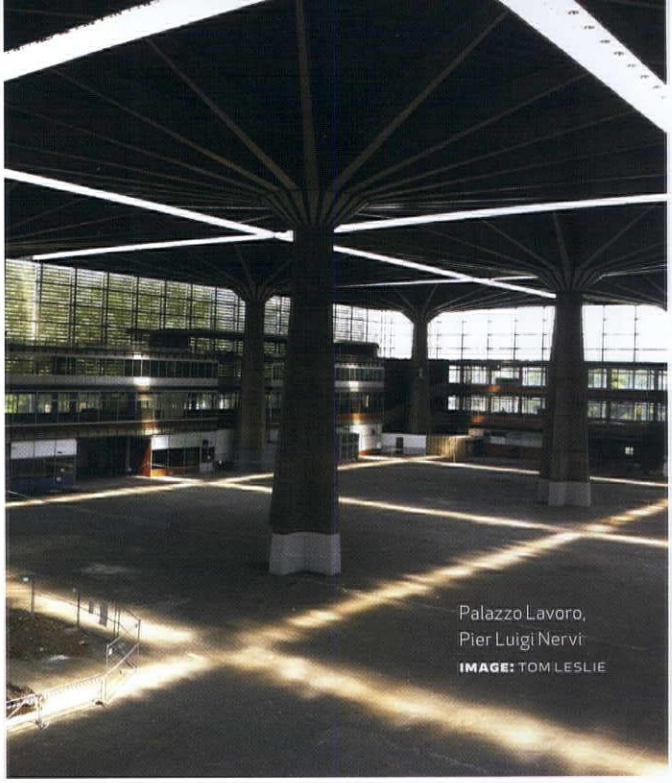
Nervi has always been a great interest of mine. Overall, my research comes down to the relationship between technology and design or, as Kevin Alter at the University of Texas puts it, the negotiations between aesthetic desires and material facts. Nervi was so fluent in the languages of statics and construction that his work is intensely communicative. Even people who have no background whatsoever in structures respond to his buildings in ways that show they understand what's going on. It's this ability to express the structural performance of a building, and his particular solutions, that I've been most interested in ever since graduate school.

What lessons do you hope to be able to teach to the next generation from your immersion in Nervi's work?

I hope I can show that the constraints he faced—tight budgets, impossible schedules and a construction industry that lagged behind the rest of Europe in terms of skilled labor and material development—forged a design sensibility that was rigorous, thoughtful and ultimately quite beautiful. Those lessons are always the most important ones for designers of all stripes: The things that make you edit also make your designs better. Always.

What do you hope to contribute to the discussions on preservation?

Right now, I think the most important and controversial discussion in preservation is the fate of the post-war generation of buildings. Nervi's best work is just hitting the 50- and 60-year marks, making it legally historic. Yet the general perception is that buildings constructed after WWII are somehow "contemporary," and thus not as deserving of protection. Chicago is losing Prentice Hospital, New York is losing the Pan Am Worldport and Turin is slowly losing Nervi's Palazzo Lavoro, maybe his greatest work. The reaction to these losses has been eerily similar to the mainstream reaction when Chicago's Stock Exchange or New York's Penn Station were demolished—namely that the buildings were obsolete, standing in the way of progress and "ugly." As a society and a culture, we almost always come around to regret those reactions, and I'm hoping to raise awareness of Nervi's work and similar buildings of his generation as structures deserving of historical status and protection.



Palazzo Lavoro, Pier Luigi Nervi
IMAGE: TOM LESLIE

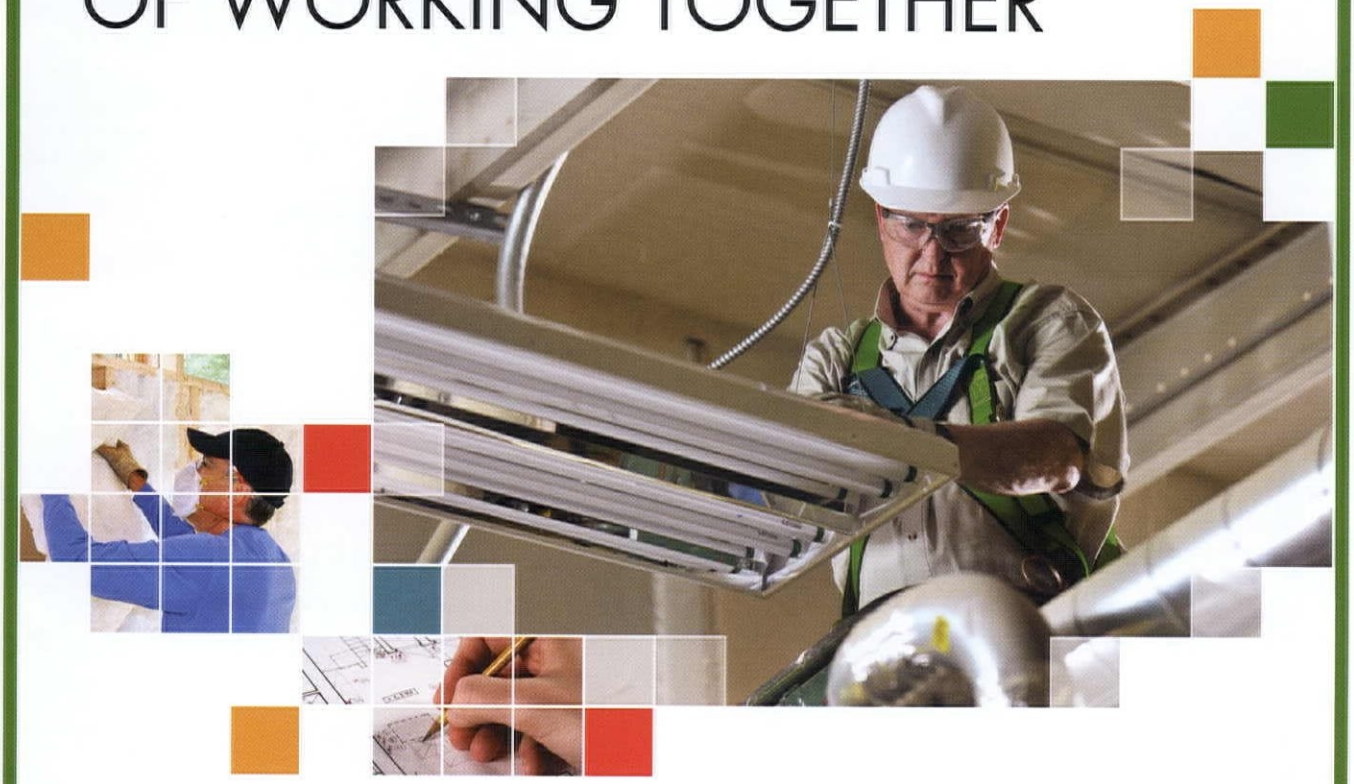
In 2011, Leslie was named Pickard Chilton Professor in Architecture at Iowa State University. The endowed professorship included a research allowance that Leslie used to travel to Rome last summer. He visited major Nervi sites, documented the buildings' preservation problems, and connected with owners and preservationists. "Without those funds and that trip, my Rome Prize proposal would not have been as convincing as it apparently was."

What does this academic year look like?

My fellowship runs six months, from September to March, and I'm hoping to offer some informal seminars and maybe some sketchbook sessions in ISU's Rome Program during the rest of the school year.

A word of thanks: None of this would have been possible without a tremendously supportive Department of Architecture, College of Design at Iowa State University, the Pickard Chilton Professorship and my colleagues, in particular Interim Department Chair Gregory Palermo, FAIA; Dean Luis Rico-Gutierrez, Assoc. AIA; and incoming Department Chair Deborah Hauptmann, Assoc. AIA, have all been very keen to help make this work. I'm grateful to them and to everyone I teach and work with in Ames for seeing this as an opportunity not just for me, but for Iowa State University. I couldn't be prouder to be carrying the Cyclone flag over to Rome.

THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER



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on the boards

Projects In Progress

Lowe Park Amphitheater

Marion / RDG Planning & Design

The Lowe Park Amphitheater in Marion will be a unique and dynamic venue. This facility, located directly north of the Art and Environmental Center, will host both small and large events. Drawn from the surrounding restored prairie and savanna, and designed by RDG artist David Dahlquist, the outdoor theater structure emulates a series of oak leaves, and the stage is built out of the prairie.

New Bohemia City Station

Cedar Rapids / OPN Architects, Inc.

The revitalization of the New Bohemia area, the arts and culture district of Cedar Rapids, has seen rapid economic and development growth since the floods of 2008. OPN Architects, Inc. has designed a multi-use project for the community to live, work and play. The New Bohemia City Station will include retail shops on the first floor, a 14-room extended-stay hotel and ballroom/event hall on the second floor and two upper floors of market-rate residential loft units. The plan also calls for a 225-seat underground cinema.

The proposed $8.5 million project has been designed to withstand the possibility of future flooding with pillars that allow removable floodwalls to be inserted at the time of a potential flood to protect the building. The hotel and ballroom will satisfy a local need for weddings and other events. Construction is expected to start in the fall and will take 12 to 14 months to complete. The project is currently awaiting approval from the City Council to proceed.

Des Moines Community Playhouse

Des Moines / BNIM Architects

The Des Moines Community Playhouse is a vibrant community resource. It has been and remains a gathering space for people of all ages, through classes, performances and social events. For nearly 90 years, it has been a part of the culture of Des Moines, particularly along 42nd Street. Because of the success of Playhouse programs, additional space is needed to expand lobby, classroom and back-of-house functions in addition to rejuvenating the Main Stage Theater and its related spaces.

The first phase of the project includes the creation of a new glass lobby, which activates 42nd Street with a glass envelope that allows passersby to view activities inside and glows at night as an active component of the community. It is a gathering area before and after performances and can be used for smaller events, bringing the culture of the theater closer to the community. The lobby is a hub of communication and social interaction, giving people an open and bright space to engage and enjoy the Playhouse. While the delicate glass lobby is of modern design, BNIM Architects chose to pay homage to the 1934 structure, keeping much of the original stonework, tying the history of the community with its bright and expanding future.

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OPN Architects and Farris Engineering
Des Moines Fire Training and Logistics Facility

OPN Architects and Design Engineers
Iowa City Community School District, Norman Borlaug Elementary School

DLR Group
for the Meadows Middle School, DC-G CSD

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for Washington Elementary School Addition, Mount Vernon CSD

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Anamosa Middle School

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WORDS: CHAD TAYLOR **IMAGES:** PAUL CROSBY
ARCHITECT: SUBSTANCE

HUB OF ACTIVITY

Situated on 5,000 square feet of plaza space just north of Court Avenue, the Principal Riverwalk Hub Spot is not the largest portion of the Principal Riverwalk project. But for Hub Spot designers from Substance, the project manifested a large and unique set of challenges.

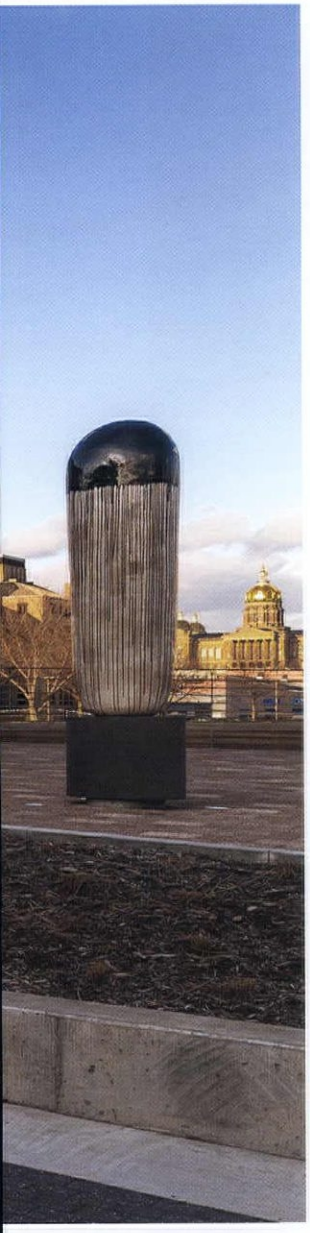
"The oddest thing for us was the duration of the project," says Substance Principal Paul Mankins, FAIA. "We received the commission in 2006, and the ribbon cutting was July 2013. That's seven years. This was not a large project, so it was interesting."

The unusual duration was brought on by a number of challenges: the size of the overall Riverwalk project, communication hiccups between multiple entities and, of course, concerns about the budget. But before Substance could get started, it had to secure the commission.

"The design master plan was done by a firm called Wallace Roberts & Todd, a very skilled landscape planning firm of out Philadelphia," says Mankins. "They had the site around Court Avenue master-planned as having two flat, boat-shaped plazas: one south of Court Avenue and one north."

Wallace Roberts & Todd originally planned to outsource the development of those plazas to other firms with national profiles, but pragmatic concerns eventually brought their search for a partner back into the state.

(Previous) Sitting just north of the Court Avenue bridge, the Principal Riverwalk Hub Spot houses a coffee shop, public restrooms and Riverwalk maintenance facilities. *(Above)* The black zinc roof shelters the cafe from direct sunlight, keeping the area cool and free of glare. The Riverwalk itself rises up gently to meet the Hub Spot at street level *(top opposite)*, and the plaza's geothermal wells, LED lighting and cross-ventilation capabilities help keep energy usage and operational costs low.

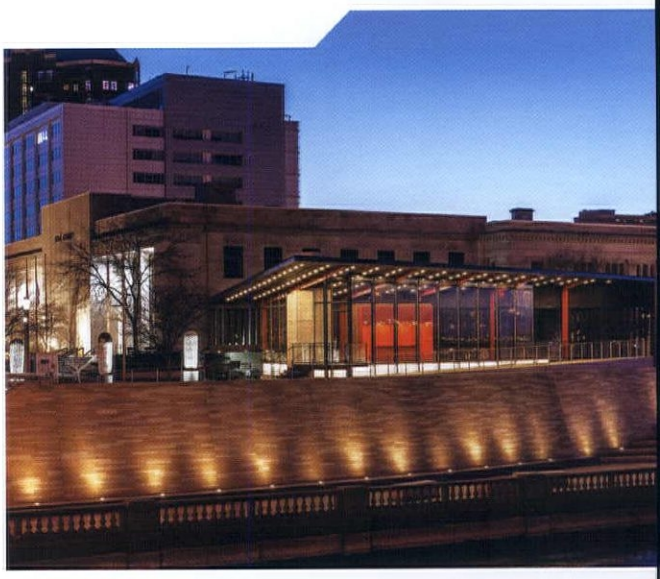


"My understanding is that they interviewed a couple of national firms regarding a kind of café/public space on the north Court site, and the estimates had come in way, way over budget," says Mankins. "So Principal suggested that they go local. Our firm was three months old, so we had really just started. We went in with a model and some basic ideas about how you might put a small pavilion on that site. They liked the fact that we had ideas, even though we really had no idea what the challenges were."

The first concern Substance had was with the size of the building's footprint. The master plan for the space called for public restrooms to service the Riverwalk recreation trail, a public space that included a small café and service spaces for electrical boards, as well as lighting and irrigation panels for Riverwalk maintenance.

"By the time you added all that up, it was 2,200 square feet," says Mankins, "which is not big, but when you started to think of that building as one level—a 2,200-square-foot building on a 5,000-square-foot plaza—there really wasn't very much plaza left. Early on, we said that if we could convince Wallace Roberts & Todd to tilt the plaza up as a sort of gentle ramp to the north and take the recreation trail down at a little faster rate, we could stack the functions. So it became a two-story building, roughly 1,100 square feet per floor."

Once the decision was made to slope the plaza and extend the pavilion onto two floors, the rest of the design took shape quickly. The result is a structure that's visually striking while remaining in tune with the Riverwalk's established aesthetic.



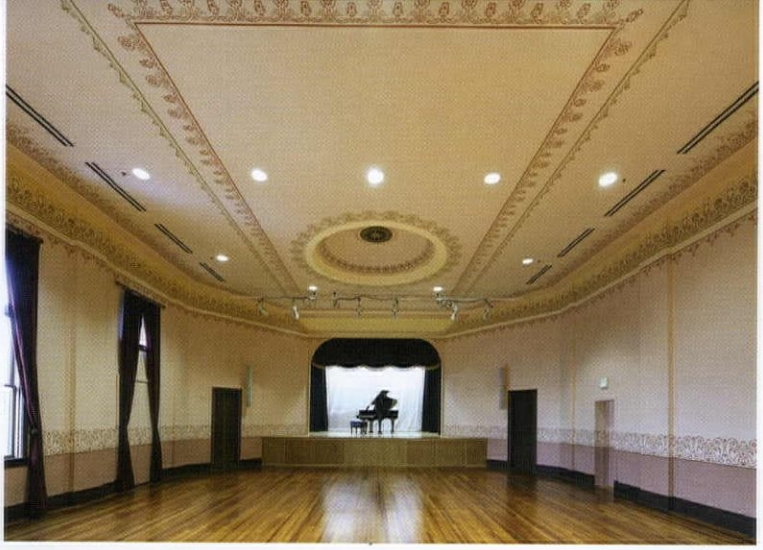
"A lot of the materials are drawn from projects that are around it," says Mankins. "That upper level only has about three materials: the reddish steel, the black zinc and then the glass. The upper level, in order to be efficient, needed to be a steel frame. We were looking for something that would avoid the appearance of columns on the river side. It would be a glass wall looking out to the river, so the steel structure is hidden within the window system."

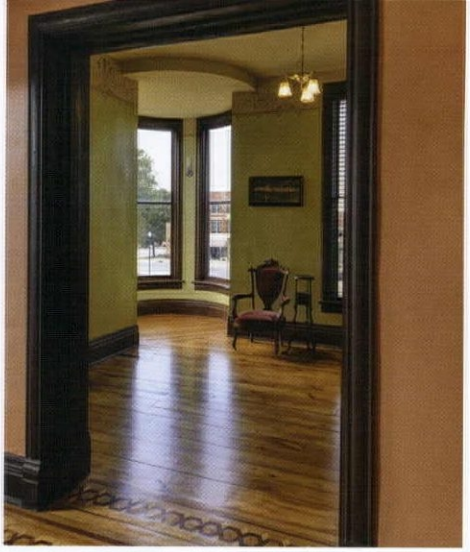
The final design is a glass café space on the upper level, with the lower level service spaces set into the gently sloping plaza. The Hub Spot is topped by a black zinc shroud that protects it from the harsh western sun and provides enough overhang to minimize direct sunlight, helping to keep cooling costs down.

Substance built the Hub Spot with an eye toward sustainability. "We used the whole plaza as a geothermal well field," says Mankins. "There's a loop of geothermal wells that run under the plaza, so the entire thing is a ground-source heating and cooling pump. When the weather allows, the building is also set up to cross-ventilate.

"The lighting was originally all fluorescent, but as the project time extended, LED lighting became more prevalent and we were able to switch over to all LED lighting," he says. "It's also wired to do daylight harvesting, which would dim the lights in accordance with the amount of sunlight coming into the building."

Even with odd beginnings and stretched timelines, the result is a stretch of Riverwalk that Substance is proud of—and one the entire city will enjoy for much, much longer than it took to complete. ■





Emblematic EVOLUTION

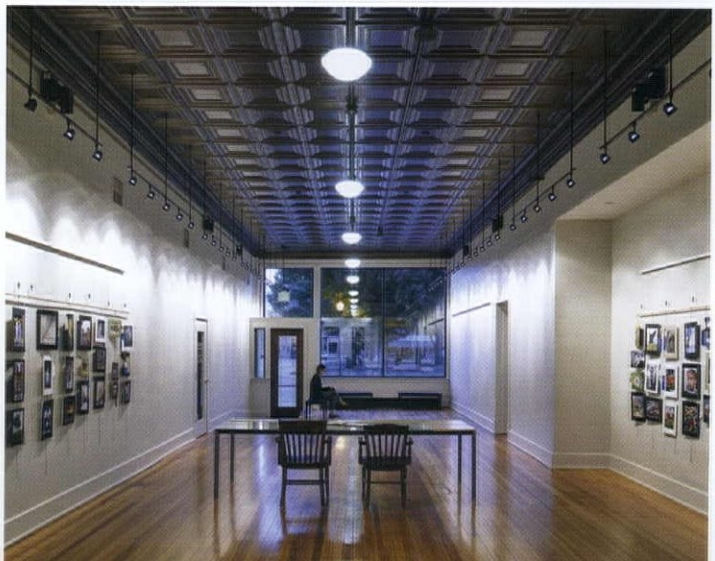
WORDS: M. MONICA GILLEN **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA **ARCHITECT:** INVISION

An effort to keep some things the same

In 1896, William McKinley was elected President, James Naismith had invented basketball a few years before, and Ed and Eva Warren built an opera house in Greenfield and although opera wasn't performed there, other entertainers did. The first floor served as a place to sell dry goods and other items, and the Warrens lived on the second floor. It opened before Christmas that year, a splendid addition to Greenfield. The three-story structure with its turret is emblematic of the town.

Early on, the brick structure with copper trim served a variety of purposes, including as a show venue with its stage on the second floor and balcony on the third. Decades later and at different points in time, basketball games were played in the auditorium and movies were shown, but entertainment choices evolved, and the building, used less and less, became rundown.

The notion to revitalize the Warren Opera House had been discussed since the late 1970s when the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. An association was formed in the late 1990s, according to Steve King, AIA, INVISION. The Hetherington and Taylor buildings were purchased in 2008, and the project was



renamed the Warren Cultural Center. In 2009, King's firm was chosen to direct the effort to generate an Historic Structures Report.

About five years prior to the 2012 grand re-opening, money was acquired from a number of sources, federal and state, and requisite private funds were raised in a short amount of time via a capital campaign.

The building measures approximately 31,000 square feet and the project cost $6.2 million to complete. As the restoration project began, ensuring stability of the 117-year-old structure was the first order of business, followed by brick tuck-pointing, window replacement and protection from the elements, water and drainage updates and foundation repairs.

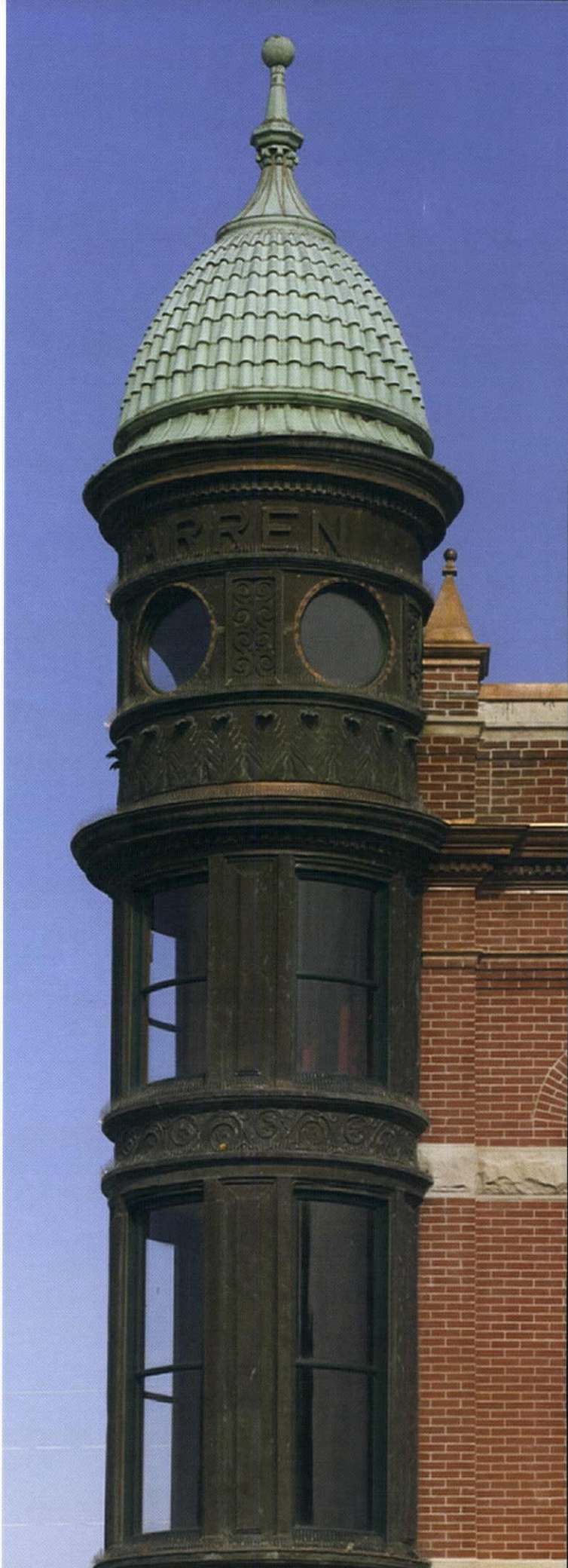
Preservationists would need to ascertain the earliest intricate stencil patterns and colors, woodwork and floors, and deliver them to their original condition.

This renovation project has had a powerful effect on the community

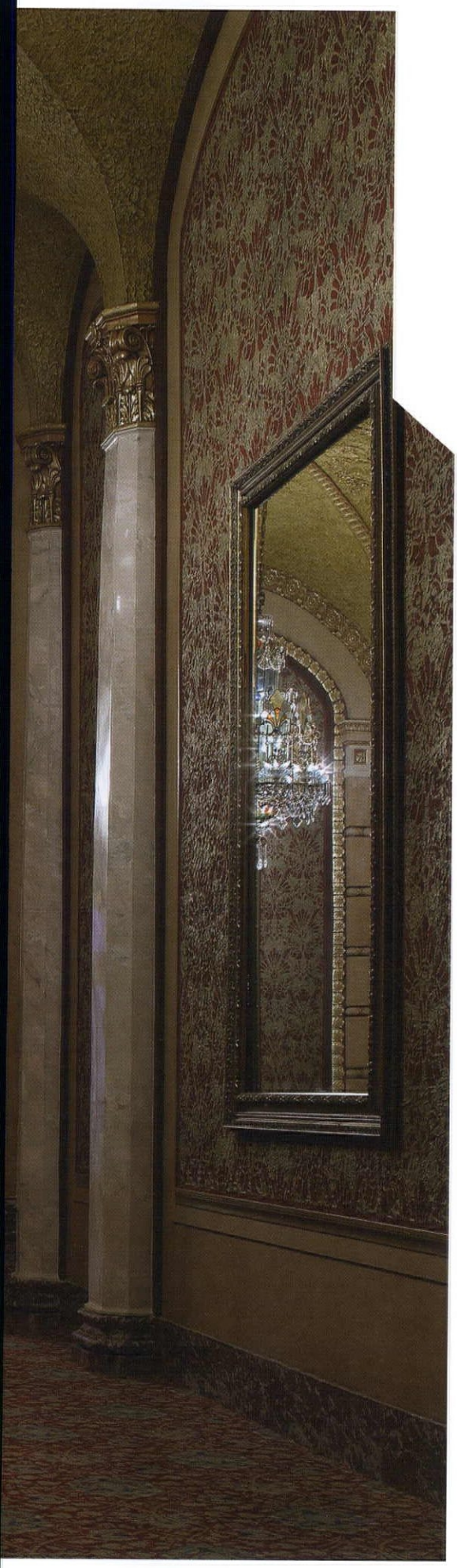
From floor to ceiling, foundation to rooftop, the structure is in a like-new state, and the uses for the building remain similar to those of 1896. Visitors can gather to conduct meetings or attend weddings, and there is banquet seating for up to 160. Some may choose to stay overnight in the balcony bedroom suite.

Necessary for the grant, a significant portion of funds went to Greenfield contractors, and dollars have found their way into the local economy and that of neighboring towns. This renovation project has had a powerful effect on the community, says King. In its first year, the Warren Cultural Center featured numerous stage shows, and offered enriching activities to an otherwise underserved populous. The high school prom was even held at the facility.

Nearly 12 decades have passed since the Warrens built the opera house. With the restoration project complete, the building welcomes visitors to the square and represents Greenfield, where residents can look to the future and its possibilities.



Community space *(opposite, clockwise from top left)* Preservationists ascertained the intricate stencil patterns and colors, woodwork and floors, and delivered them to their original grandeur. The turret and its interior in the Warrren apartments is returned to like-new condition. The auditorium now welcomes stage shows, celebratory dinners and even the high school prom. The lobby on the ground floor of the Hetherington Building functions as gallery space and a place to exhibit visual arts. *(Right)* From floor to ceiling, foundation to rooftop, the edifice is returned to like-new condition, including the impressive copper turret.



WORDS: ROB WHITEHEAD **IMAGES:** WAYNE JOHNSON, MAIN STREET STUDIO **ARCHITECT:** OPN ARCHITECTS, INC.

PLAY IT *again*

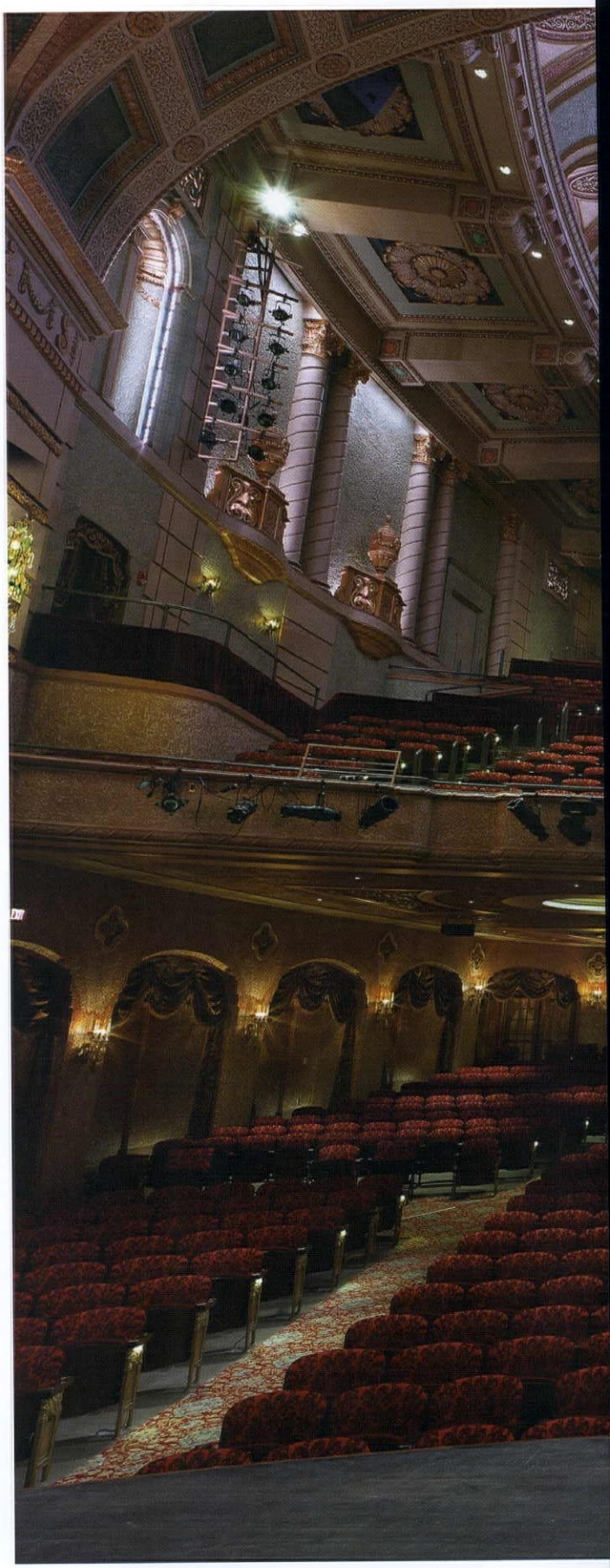
The rise, fall and revival of the iconic Paramount Theatre in Cedar Rapids

Less than a year after a beautiful new vaudeville theater opened in downtown Cedar Rapids, the Great Flood of 1929 saw the Cedar River crest to its highest recorded level at the time, bringing water a few feet away from the new venue's lobby. The building's famously decorated Hall of Mirrors and auditorium—with marezzo scagliola plaster finish, aluminum-leaf paints and glazes, crystal chandeliers, stained-glass light fixtures and a Wurlitzer organ—remained unharmed, preserving for future generations a majestic example of movie palace design found throughout the country in the 1920s and '30s.

Over the ensuing decades, other floods came and went. Like other movie palaces, the Paramount Theatre's continued survival was threatened by changes in cultural interests in entertainment options. The Paramount needed to evolve, so it underwent two renovations (in 1975 and 2002) that allowed the building to be used for a wider variety of performances while preserving the unique architectural character of the spaces for future generations. For years, the theater business thrived, and visitors came to embrace this venue and its memorable architecture as an important part of the city's cultural identity and historical legacy. This collection of spaces became more than just a structure, "it became a great source of community pride," says Bradd Brown, AIA, principal at OPN Architects, Inc.

Yet the real value of a structure to a community is never really known until its very existence is jeopardized. For the Paramount, and for much of Cedar Rapids, this moment occurred in June 2008 when a catastrophic flood knocked out power to the city, threatened the potable water supply, decimated thousands of structures, closed businesses and forced municipal leadership

Updating a Classic *(previous)* The colors, textures, patterns, and finishes that adorn the fully restored Hall of Mirrors was faithfully researched and meticulously restored to recall its original ambiance. *(Right)* The modern updates in the main performance space were carefully selected and arranged to compliment the original décor while enhancing the serviceability of the space.



The real value of a structure to a community is never really known until its very existence is jeopardized

offices to be relocated. Remarkably, this flood crested 10 feet higher than the Great Flood of 1929, which meant that there was eight feet of standing water inside the lobby of the Paramount. The Wurlitzer organ was destroyed, the basement was decimated, and the plaster detail in the lobby and auditorium—from the floor to the balcony—was so damaged that it needed to be removed. A significant portion of the historical fabric that had been etched into the memories of its visitors had washed away. So what value was left?

In the following months, inspectors, design professionals, actuaries and myriad government entities set out to determine the value of the damaged buildings throughout Cedar Rapids, including the Paramount Theatre, in economic terms, in an attempt to prioritize the rebuilding process and authorize funding. It is in these moments—where buildings are reduced to basic, clinical and quantifiable terms—that the most interesting questions about the "real" value of a building arise. Was the Paramount valuable because of its location, its potential for revenue generation, its status on the National Register of Historic Places, the iconic qualities of its architectural space or its place in the memory of the community? The answer, it seemed, was "all of the above." Brown says that although the Paramount isn't technically a civic building, it enjoys a special status as a culturally important building to the public because "this facility is one that we all entered, used and enjoyed."

And yet, much of the historical identity of the project had been destroyed, and the Paramount suffered from certain functional drawbacks, inherent in the original design, that needed fixing—seats that were too small, compressed stage and back-of-house areas that limited productions, dead acoustic spots in the hall, etc. As a result, even more interesting questions regarding the Paramount's continued existence began to form:

(Top) The steepness of the balcony creates perfect sightlines for performances but it required several updates to the seating and railings to make it more user-friendly. *(Bottom)* The arched openings between rooms and the various stairways and mezzanines found in the Paramount's lobby create a highly social space.

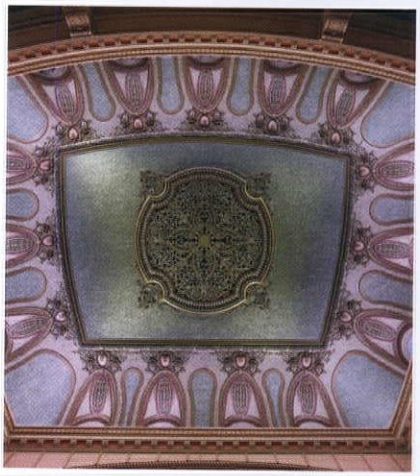
Should the rebuilding process replicate the exact pre-flood conditions or would new modifications also be welcome? If the building were to be changed, how would old and new aspects coexist in a manner that honored the qualities of the building that gave it its original value while increasing its future relevancy and worth? Brown describes the importance of creating a rebuilding strategy that looked to both the past and the future: "To bring back a cultural icon sends a strong message about the future success of the community ... the community was not only coming back, but coming back better than before."

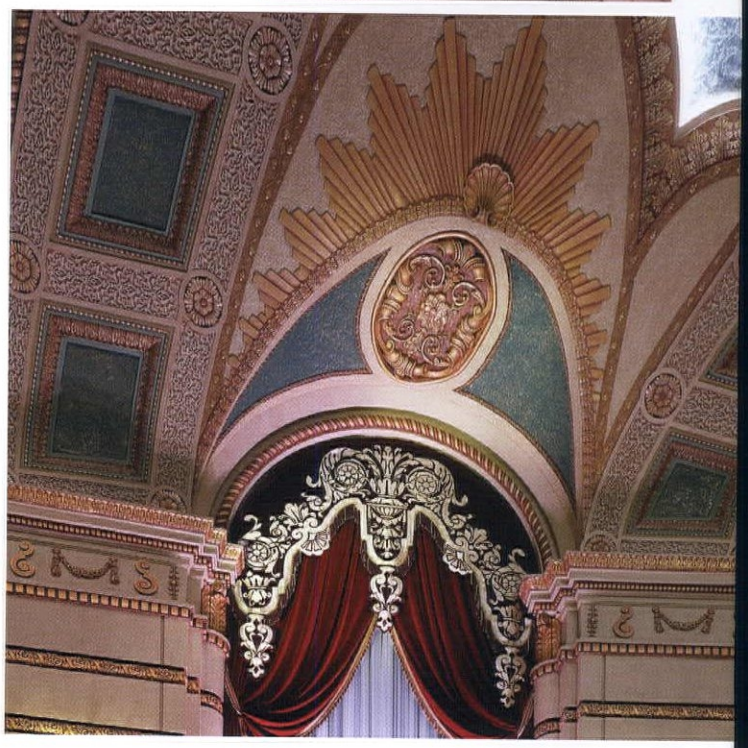
The City Council-appointed building committee, which was a collaborative design team of architects and consultants specializing in theater design and restoration was led by OPN Architects, Inc. and consisted of Orchestra Iowa (primary occupant), Venue Works (building manager) and Ryan Companies Inc. (construction manager). This diverse committee crafted an approach to the project that defined the work in four basic categories: restoration, renovation, mitigation and upgrades. According to OPN project manager Michael Thomas, AIA, it was also important that the Federal Emergency Management Agency and State Historic Preservation Office collaborated with the committee to define a scope of work that more likely ensured an optimal level of potential financial support.

> "The community was not only coming back, but coming back better than before."
>
> **BRADD BROWN, AIA**

The final scope of work installed bigger seats with more legroom; expanded the orchestra pit, stage house and support spaces to improve the range of performances that could be offered; improved the acoustics by using a thicker depth of plaster in areas where the original had been removed, integrating cheek walls into existing alcoves and creating a moveable forestage reflector that could be lowered into place; created elevator access to the upper area; and added hairpin rails on the steep balcony stairs to improve patron safety. New rigging, sound and projection systems were added and all concession areas were improved. Many of the most recognizable improvements involved the painstakingly researched and beautifully crafted restorations, which earned the design team and the Paramount Theatre a 2012 AIA Craft Award (described in "Encore," *Iowa Architect*, Summer 2012.)

In the case of the Paramount Theatre, its value could be found—or refound—during times of hardship for the community. In an emotional re-opening ceremony in November 2012, the executive director of Orchestra Iowa, Robert Massey, who was named director just weeks before the flood, finally heard his orchestra perform in the Paramount Theatre. And the fantastical movie palace décor that was initially meant to transport visitors to faraway places now creates an atmosphere that takes people to another time, while still feeling right at home. ia





One of a Kind *(top to bottom)* The performance hall was updated to enhance orchestra performances, including the implementation of a moveable acoustical shell. The domed ceiling of the performance hall was updated to accommodate modern conveniences without altering the original aesthetics. Like many of the early American movie palaces, there are a variety of architectural styles in the décor—their unique combination gives it a style all its own.

SAFE ROOM

An interesting touch makes the Giovannetti Shelter in Urbandale more than just a shelter

Inside and Out The wood softens the interior space and is a repeat pattern from the outside of the building, tying the interior and exterior together.

WORDS: SUSAN VANDE HAAR **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA
ARCHITECT: ASK STUDIO

As a Walker-Johnston Park board member, I understand the importance of public input and why it is vital for park planning. It helps us listen to what citizens value and desire for their quality of life in the place where they live.

In Urbandale, their public forum led to a significant event. One participant, with a working knowledge of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) shelters and the availability of funding, asked if the board had considered building a shelter with a safe room. The original thought was to design a shelter for the Walker-Johnston Park. Shelter use is an important and integral part of park usage, but having a shelter that also includes a safe room is exceptional.

Today, the 5,580-square-foot shelter rests beautifully on a knoll in the 75-acre park. It does not resemble a bunker or fortress, but the use of steel, wood and precast concrete form an aesthetic that is airy in its design. The lightness of the structure belies the strength of the building—the walls are 12-inch precast concrete. The slender columns at the exterior entrance begin the pattern and rhythm of design that sets the tone for the interior space. The wood cladding on the exterior is carried into the lobby and interior room, surrounding the fireplace. The wood, while softening the interior, also creates acoustical wall panels to absorb noise. The windows provide beautiful views of the park. Utilizing simple raw materials allowed the architects to bring beauty through thoughtful design.

> Utilizing simple raw materials allowed the architects to bring beauty through thoughtful design.

The precast concrete is reminiscent of stone used in WPA park shelters in the 1930s. Jan Herke, director of the Urbandale Parks and Recreation Department, is pleased with this unique and exciting project. Urbandale wrote grants to the state and federal government to help secure safe room funding for this $1,877,000 project. Along with these grants and funding from the city, the budget allowed dual-purpose design and construction. It is a useable and well-designed park shelter, and a safe place for citizens during a storm. The safe room comprises 80 percent of the building and meets FEMA 361 and ICC 500 requirements.

Quality of life is what parks and recreation departments are all about. Urbandale shows innovation and forward thinking with this structure, increasing awareness as the park and shelter are used. With our beautifully unpredictable Iowa skies, residents now know where to find shelter from the storm. ia

CROSSROADS

An arsonist tried, and failed, to rip the architectural heart out of Stuart

WORDS: KELLY ROBERSON **IMAGES:** MATT NIEBUHR
ARCHITECT: KNOWLES BLUNCK ARCHITECTURE

Parisians famously almost demolished the Eiffel Tower in 1909. Countless commissions by Frank Lloyd Wright—arguably the country's most well-known architect—have been lost to the ages. Even today, iconic structures face uncertain futures. Even the Folk Art Museum in New York City has been threatened this year with removal by its new owner, the Museum of Modern Art. It's a fate not unfamiliar to all kinds of structures: Age takes its toll. Owners change and upkeep increases. And function is recast, too, as communities grow, shrink, adapt, change.

But what, then, do communities do when structures are destroyed through no fault of their own? That was the agonizing question faced by residents of the west-central Iowa town of Stuart. Over the years, their spacious 1910 All Saints Church had become a focal point for area residents, its Byzantine and Romanesque-style walls anchoring the exterior, its Italian Baroque interior inspiring awe. For local Catholics, it was the place for rites of passage; for the town, there were curious visitors, lured, while on nearby Interstate 80, wondering what that soaring structure was, visible from the highway.

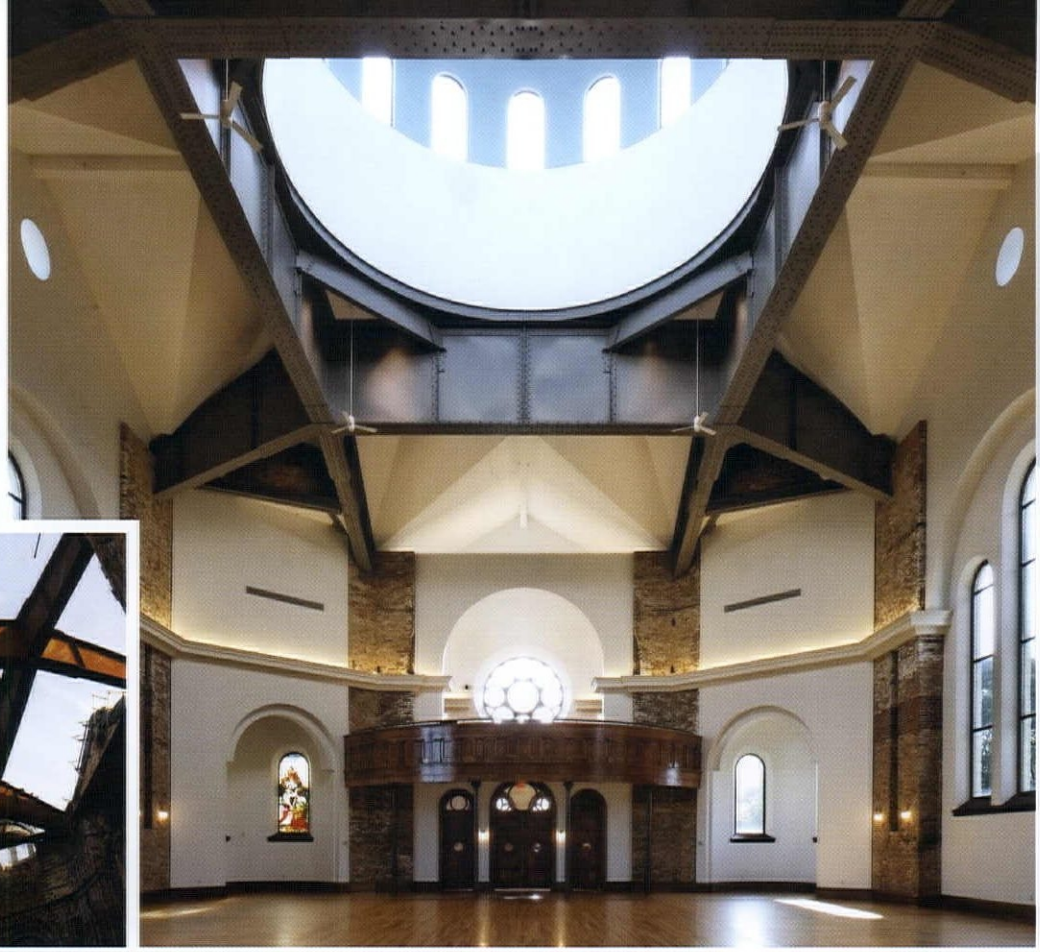
Those lifetime milestones and the one-time encounters came to a crashing halt August 22, 1995: A lone arsonist lit a flame that consumed the church. His intent, he said, was to "take the heart and soul out of a small Catholic community." For a time, it seemed, he may have succeeded, as residents debated amongst themselves, uncertain what to do with the post-arson structure.

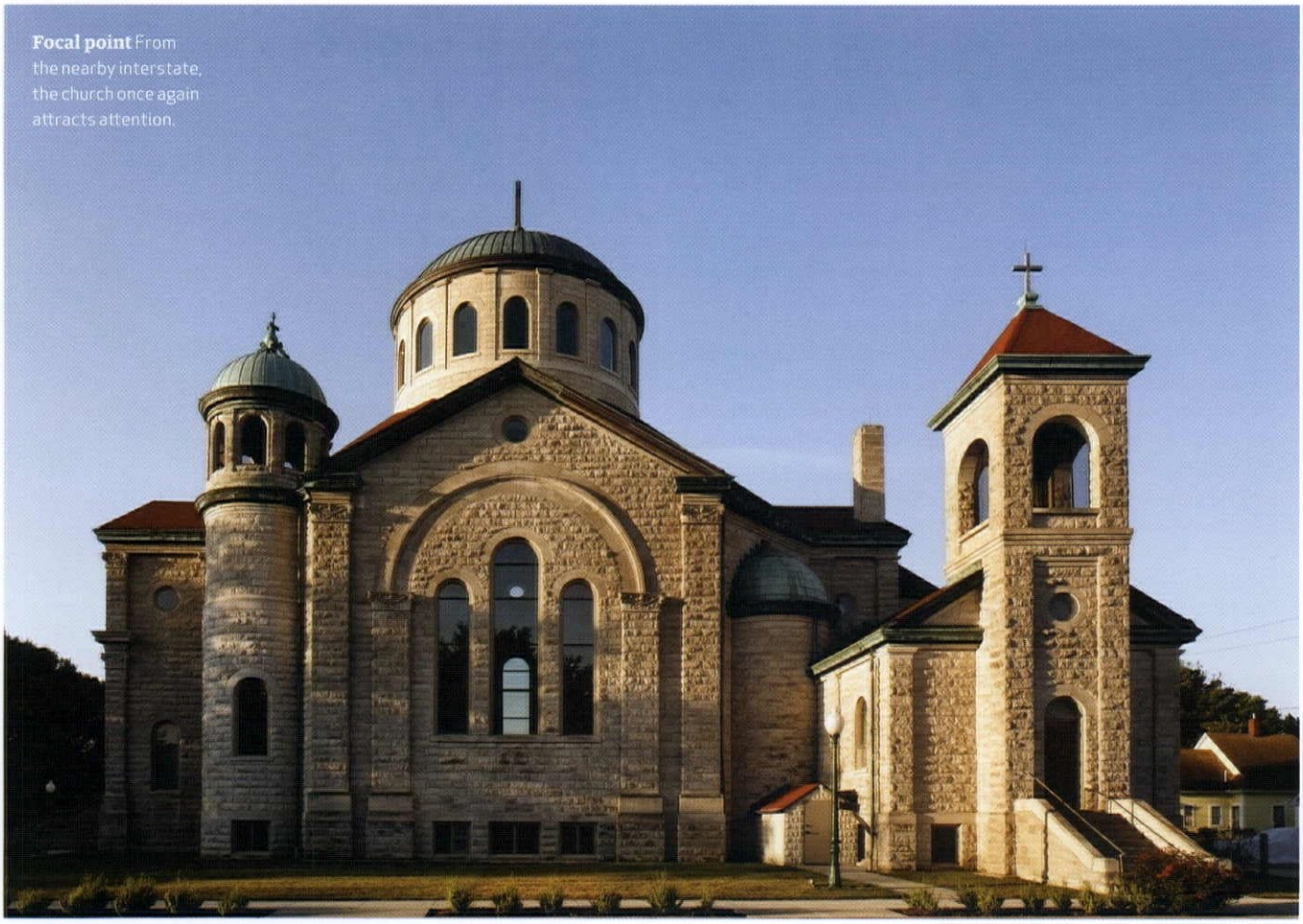
In the end, it was a decision they would have little control over. The diocese wanted a new building, not a restoration of the damaged one. What would they do with those charred and blackened walls, gaping holes and piles of rubble? Plow it under? Try to reclaim it for the community? "Things were really in shambles," says resident Dick Doherty. "I remember my mom, Irene, said to me, 'They are not going to restore the church and you have to do something about it.'"

What he and other like-minded rebuilding residents did was write a letter to the parish council. It was eventually published in both *the Stuart Herald* and *the Des Moines Register*, and the publicity became the kickstart for a group called Project Restore. They began meeting weekly, brainstorming, strategizing, trying to get the building wrestled away from the diocese.

That finally happened in September 1999, but the pace of change would be glacial. Fundraising was piecemeal, the purpose for the building still being debated. Without a large enough donation pool to restore the church all at once, Project Restore realized that they'd have to approach it very much at their own pace. For that, they enlisted Knowles Blunck Architecture of Des Moines, who began in earnest in 2008—nearly 13 years after the fire. "When we came to look at the project, two of the rooms on the main level and one room in the basement were usable," says project manager Jeff Wagner, AIA.

Before and after Sky was the focal point of the building, pre-renovation: The fire destroyed nearly the entire structure. To rebuild, the architects asked community members to provide photos of events at the church. From there, they created a structure that can continually be updated as funds allow. *(Previous)* The damage to the church was contained enough to provide the architects a base to work with. Some original brick wall is still visible on the main floor.





Focal point From the nearby interstate, the church once again attracts attention.

> You're picking through the ashes and trying to put things back together from whatever you can find.
>
> **JEFF WAGNER, AIA**

"Everything else on the inside for the most part had been removed, with the exception of what was still clinging to the walls. The glass in many locations had been broken and most of the stained glass was gone. There was a big hole in the middle of the building where you could look up and see sky."

Restoration projects such as this are as much archaeology as anything else. "You're picking through the ashes and trying to put things back together from whatever you can find," says Wagner. That meant asking the community for photos—of baptisms, weddings and other events. "It's not so much what the focus is, but what's behind the focus of the photo that you use to fill in the spaces. You're looking at that and trying to figure out what was in the mind of the original architects, so trying to reverse engineer what they had done and be true to what they were trying to do."

At the same time, Project Restore and the town of Stuart had finally figured out a fitting purpose for the structure: It would become the Saints Center for Culture and the Arts, with exhibits dedicated to promoting religious tolerance and education. Doherty is now Project Restore's project manager, and the facility is also available, as it was before, for those momentous events such as weddings and other celebrations.

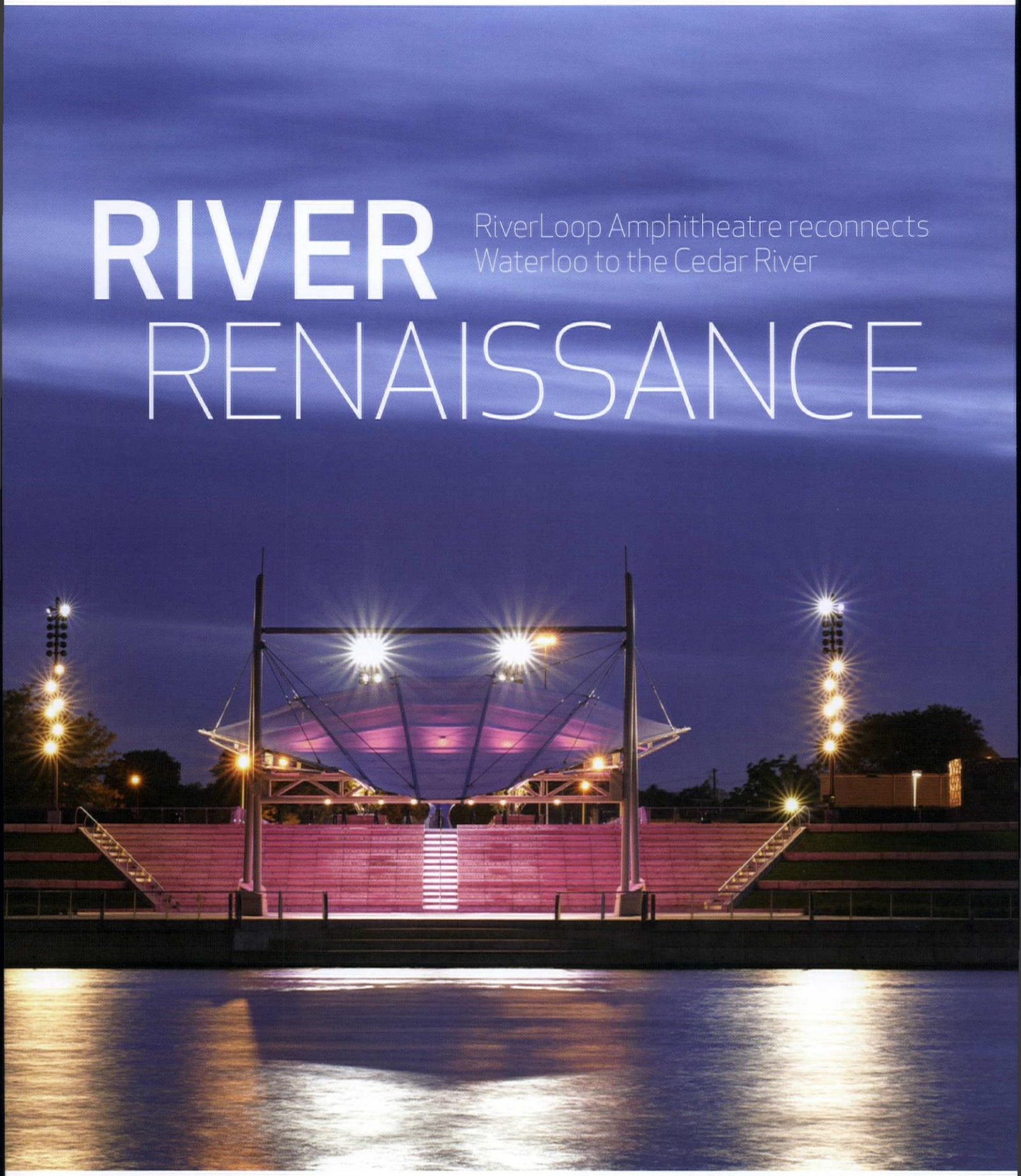
With the minimalist budget, the architects focused on three main goals for the building: restoring the exterior to as close as possible to its previous incarnation, correcting historically inaccurate updates that may have occurred over the years, and finishing the interior in a way that offered flexibility to the community. The floor—originally sloped—was leveled; other elements were completed in such a way that the building's owners can continue the restoration should budget allow. For example, the cornice is stepped out from where the brick is exposed, says Wagner, so that more plaster work can be done without removing the cornice.

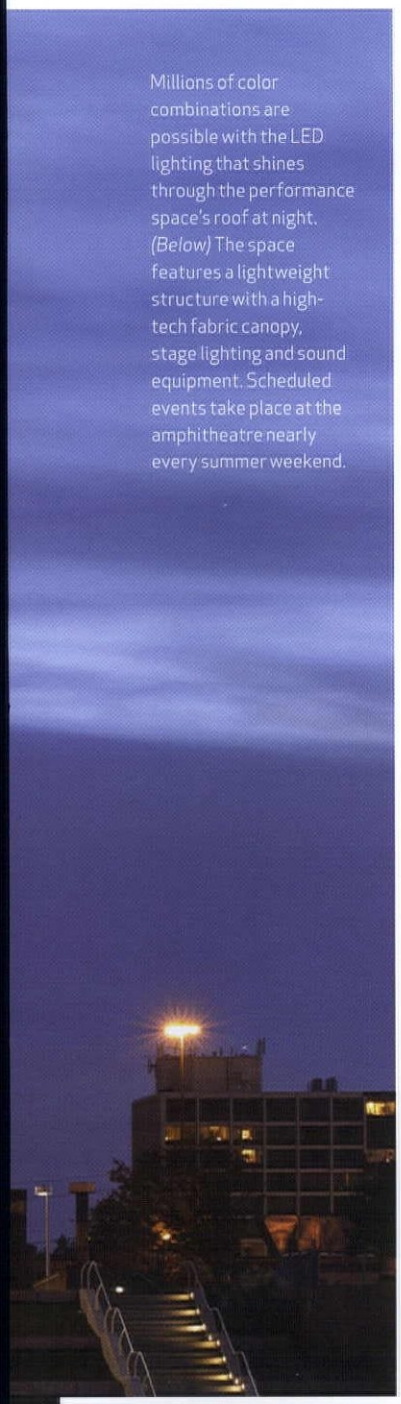
It became, says Wagner, a labor of love that saw much community cheerleading. "There were some key moments in construction, like when the dome was lifted in place," says Wagner. "People gathered around to watch, and they hadn't seen the building in its completeness like that in about 8 years. It brought a lot of people to tears." ib

Coming back to life *(top to bottom)* As much as the architects created a usable structure, they also restored the church to its original appearance when possible by removing historically inaccurate elements. Meeting space was carved out of the lower floor of the church. The church has once again become a popular spot for weddings and other landmark life events *(photo courtesy of Elle Lacher Photography)*.

RIVER RENAISSANCE

RiverLoop Amphitheatre reconnects Waterloo to the Cedar River





Millions of color combinations are possible with the LED lighting that shines through the performance space's roof at night. *(Below)* The space features a lightweight structure with a high-tech fabric canopy, stage lighting and sound equipment. Scheduled events take place at the amphitheatre nearly every summer weekend.

WORDS: CAMILLE WOLFE **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA
ARCHITECT: INVISION

Today, Waterloo's RiverLoop Amphitheatre is a popular spot for people to enjoy music, festivals or even their lunch hour. It opened in July 2012, but the project actually started decades before.

Waterloo citizens had been separated from the Cedar River by walls and levees constructed after major flooding in the 1960s. An AIA-sponsored design charrette in the mid-1990s looked at ways to reconnect the community with the river, eventually inspiring a Vision Iowa project to revitalize the downtown riverfront.

The RiverLoop Amphitheatre was part of the master plan, which included a trail system and a playground to increase recreation opportunities on the river. But lack of funding left the performance space component in question. It wasn't part of the Vision Iowa funds—and those who wanted a permanent bandshell withdrew funding when they discovered that wouldn't be possible, since the site is within the floodway of the river.

The funds were ultimately raised and the new performance space is the focal point of the project. Sitting at the river's edge, the dramatic structure features two steel masts supporting a lightweight structure with a high-tech fabric canopy, stage lighting and sound equipment. Multicolored LED lighting shines through the fabric, creating an animated light show at night.

The overhead structure also provides some acoustic properties, supplemented by an aluminum-faced shell that can be taken down in the event of a flood. Every detail—down to the native grasses selected for their deep root system—was designed to withstand floodwaters.

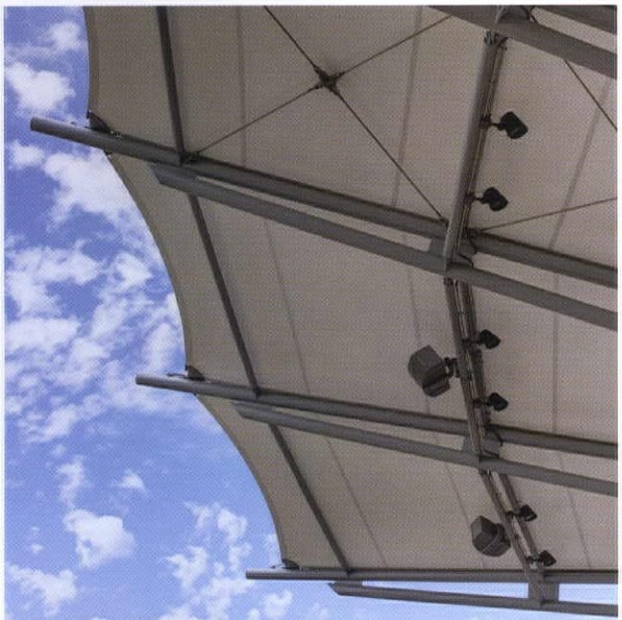
"We had to have a light footprint," explains Mike Broshar, FAIA, of INVISION. "We developed the design in such a way that it can be flooded without being damaged. You just come in, clean up, and it's ready to go again."

The amphitheatre seats about 800 people, and can accommodate up to 1,200 including grassy areas and standing room in the adjacent plaza. The benches are made of native Iowa limestone, which ties in with the benches lining the riverfront trail.

Since the amphitheatre opened, the response has been terrific. President Obama spoke there during his 2012 campaign. Friday'Loo events are held there throughout the summer. And the municipal band has moved its concerts to the riverfront. The adjacent Waterloo Center for the Arts also started an annual "Stem and Stein" wine- and beer-tasting event with continuous music performances in the amphitheatre. In addition, Mark's Park—the children's park with a splash pad and play equipment next to the amphitheatre—is constantly in use on warm days.

> We developed the design in such a way that it can be flooded without being damaged.
>
> **MIKE BROSHAR, FAIA**

"It's just incredible," says Waterloo mayor Buck Clark. "The amphitheatre has provided a place for all kinds of activity that would otherwise not have happened." According to Clark, there are scheduled events at the amphitheatre nearly every weekend of the summer. Most are music performances, but weddings, reunions and art festivals have taken place there as well. "People who haven't seen Waterloo in a while come to town and are just in awe of our riverfront now," he says. "It's a great spot. We're really proud of it."



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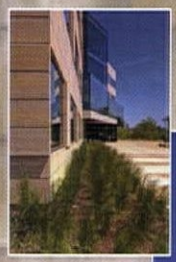
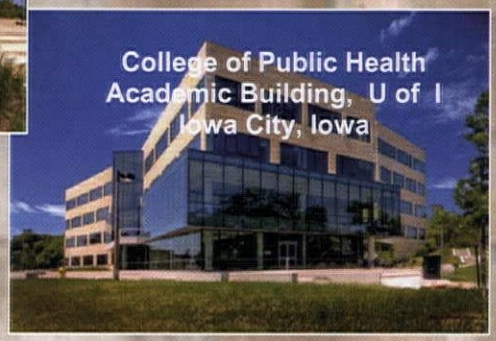
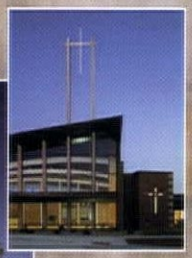
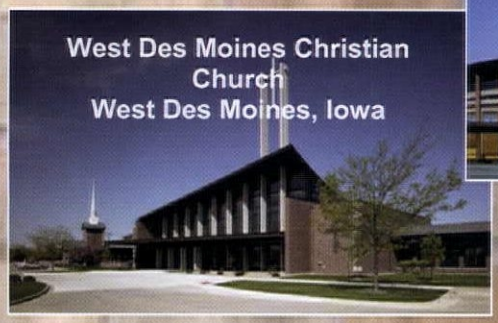




Rohrbach Associates PC
Iowa City, Iowa
Architect in Charge:
Steven A. Rohrbach, AIA
Kenneth J. Berzinski, AIA

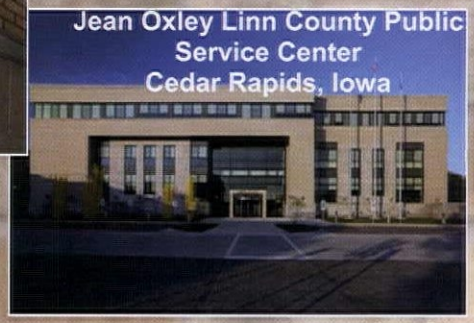
Award of Merit





Shiffler Associates Architects, PLC
Des Moines, Iowa
Architect in Charge:
Bryan Shiffler, AIA

Special Mention



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Architect in Charge:
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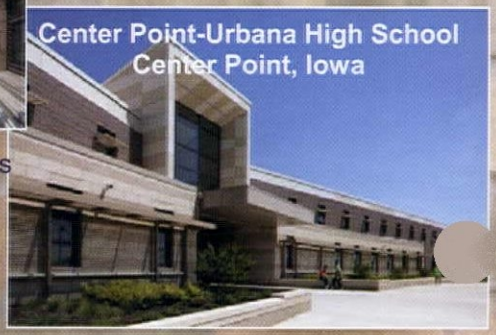

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Architect in Charge:
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- 26 Cinderella | 3 pm performed by the Moscow Festival Ballet
- 28 *The Addams Family Musical* | 7:30 pm

FEBRUARY
- 14 Béla Fleck, Abigail Washburn & Del McCoury Band | 7:30 pm

MARCH
- 13 The TEN Tenors | 7:30 pm
- 24 Australian Chamber Orchestra | 7:30 pm
- 26 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra | 7:30 pm with Wynton Marsalis

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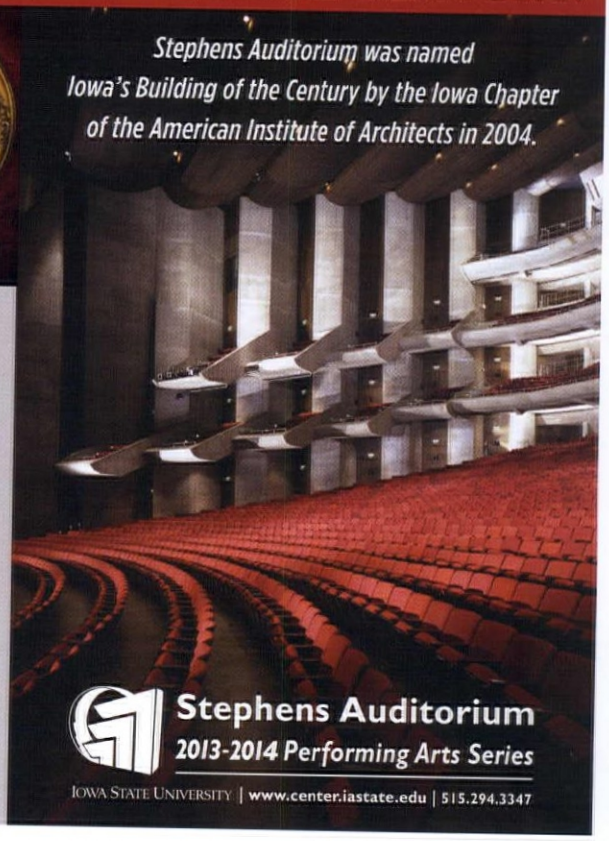

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How to Select an AIA Architect

Just as you would with any other major undertaking in life, it is important to find an architect who is a good match with your goals, your concept of the project, your personality and your budget. Choosing the right person from the start allows you to enjoy the process as much as the finished product. The following steps in the selection process can make all the difference in creating a successful client-architect partnership.

STEP 1

Make a list of potential firms and solicit information from them. Colleagues and acquaintances who have worked with architects are excellent resources, as is your local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Contact those architects or firms and ask for information, qualifications and references. If you are ready to ask the architect for a preliminary proposal, send a written description of your project to help them in the process. Find out how the architect charges for services and ask about additional expenses that could occur as the project moves ahead.

STEP 2

Evaluate your finalists. Consider your candidates' records in general, as well as their direct experience with projects similar to your own. Determine who can best complete the project within your timeframe and budget. If possible, visit a few projects designed by your finalists. There's nothing like looking at the actual work of a candidate to decide whether you are a match.

STEP 3

Interview two or three final contenders for the job. See if your personalities mesh, as well as your concepts for the project. Clarify the proposed schedule, fee structure and areas of responsibility.

STEP 4

At this point, you will probably have a good idea who your leading candidate is. To reinforce your instincts, make a checklist. Look at relevant experience, technical competence, budget considerations and timeframe. Finally, review the interview in your mind. Did the architect really listen to what you were saying? Did he or she ask the right questions? Did he or she offer reasonable solutions? Above all, did you feel comfortable?

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architect: substance
photo: paul crosby

project credits

Hub of Activity

Project: Principal Riverwalk Hub Spot
Location: Des Moines
Architect: Substance
Contractor: Covenant Construction Services
Civil Engineer: Stanley Consultants
Mechanical and Electrical Engineers: KJWW Engineering
Structural Consultant: Charles Saul Engineering
Landscape Architect: Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC
Photographer: Paul Crosby

Emblematic Evolution

Project: Warren Cultural Center
Location: Greenfield
Architect: INVISION
Contractor: Lang Construction Group, Inc.
Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering and Bluestone Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA

Play it Again

Project: Paramount Theatre Renovation
Location: Cedar Rapids
Architects: OPN Architects, Inc.
Historic Paint and Plaster: Martinez + Johnson Architecture; Conrad Schmitt Studios, Inc.; Olympic Companies, Inc.
Historic Surfaces: Anthony Kartsonas
Architectural Lighting: Schuler Shook, St. Louis Antique Lighting Co.
Organ Restoration: Jeff Weiler & Associates; Crome Organ Restoration
Photographer: Wayne Johnson, Main Street Studio

Safe Room

Project: Walker-Johnston Park Shelter
Architect: ASK Studio
Location: Urbandale
Contractor: Rochon Corporation
Engineer: KJWW Engineering Consultants
Civil Engineer: Snyder & Associates
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA

Crossroads

Project: Restoration of Saints Center for Culture and the Arts
Architect: Knowles Blunck Architecture
Location: Stuart
Contractor: Koester Construction
Engineer: Tometich Engineering
Photographer: Matt Neibuhr

River Renaissance

Project: River Amphitheater
Location: Waterloo
Architect: INVISION
Contractor: Prairie Construction; Peters Construction; PCI
Engineer: MODUS; AECOM-Waterloo; Craig Ritland Landscape Architect; JP-SE
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA

advertising index

AIA Iowa — 43
AARP — 13
Alliant Energy — 44
Architectural Wall Systems Company — BC
Charles Saul Engineering Inc — 46
Commercial New Construction Program — 18
Confluence — 45
Design Alliance — IBC
European Motors — 6
Iowa State Center — 41
Kate-Lo Tile — 19
Knowles Blunck Architecture — 41
Masonry Institute of Iowa — 40
MidAmerican Energy — 16
Neumann Monson Architects — 4
Northstar Surfaces — 46
OPN Architects, Inc. — 46
Saints Center — IBC
Shive-Hattery Architecture-Engineering — IBC
The Weidt Group — 42
The Weitz Co. — IBC
Tometich Engineering — 42
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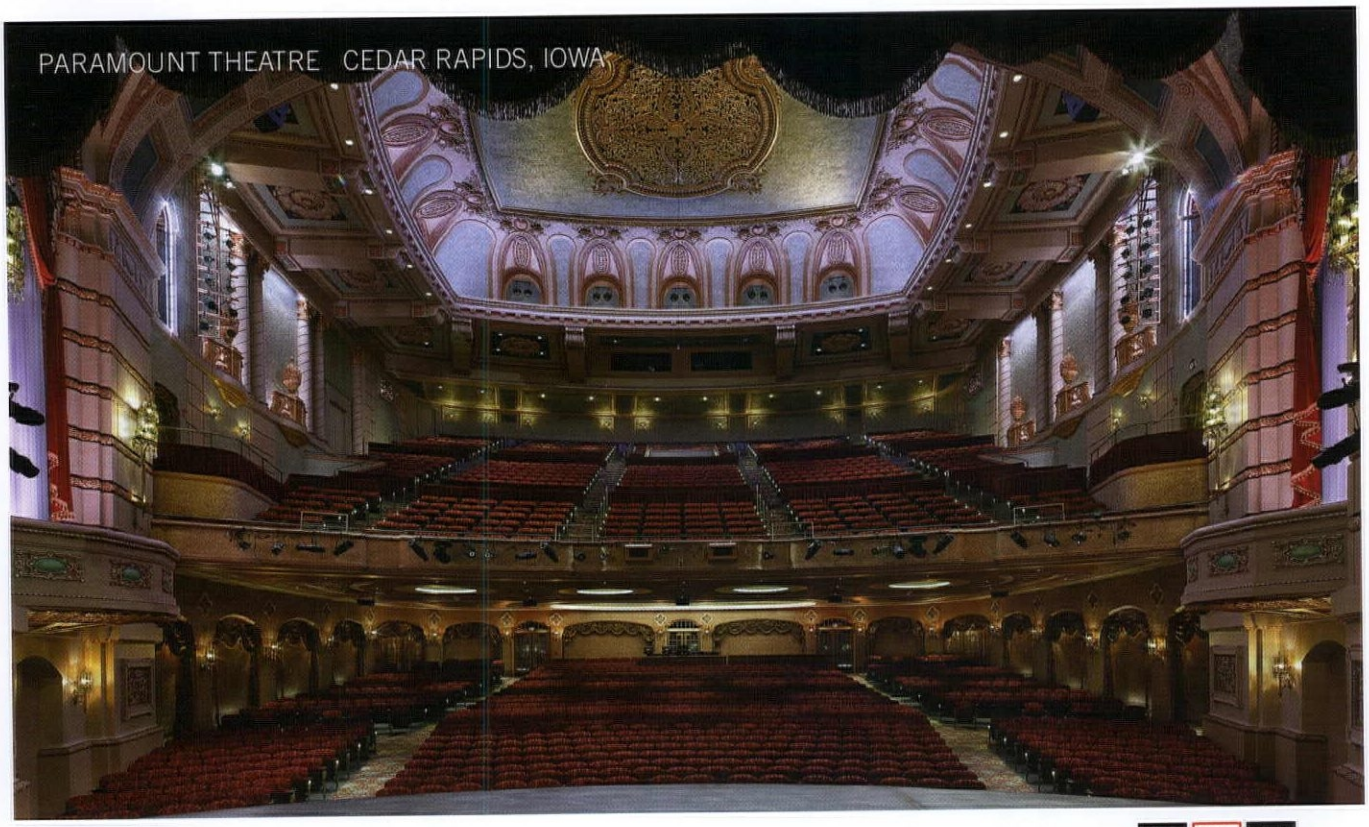

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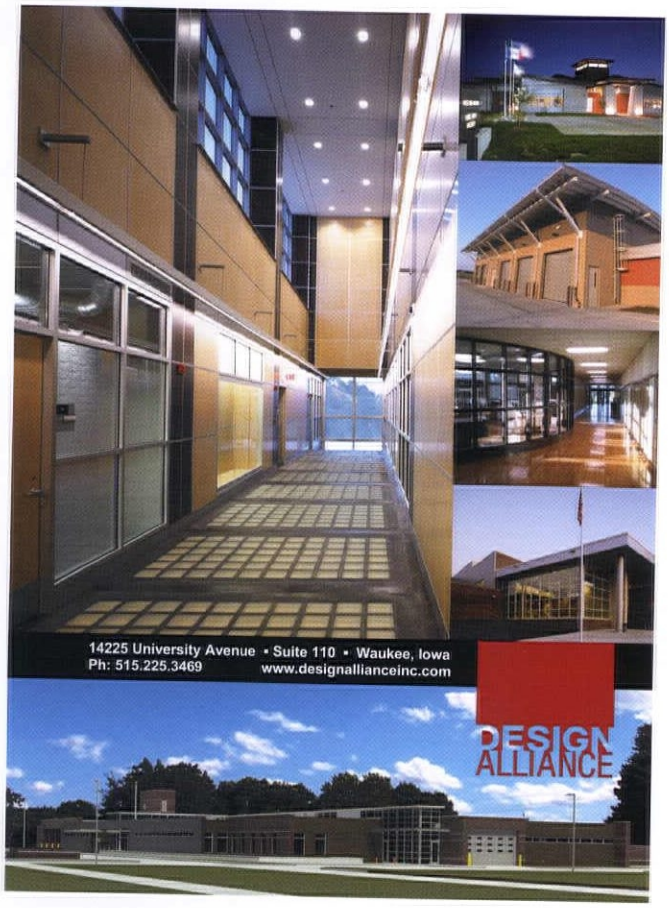

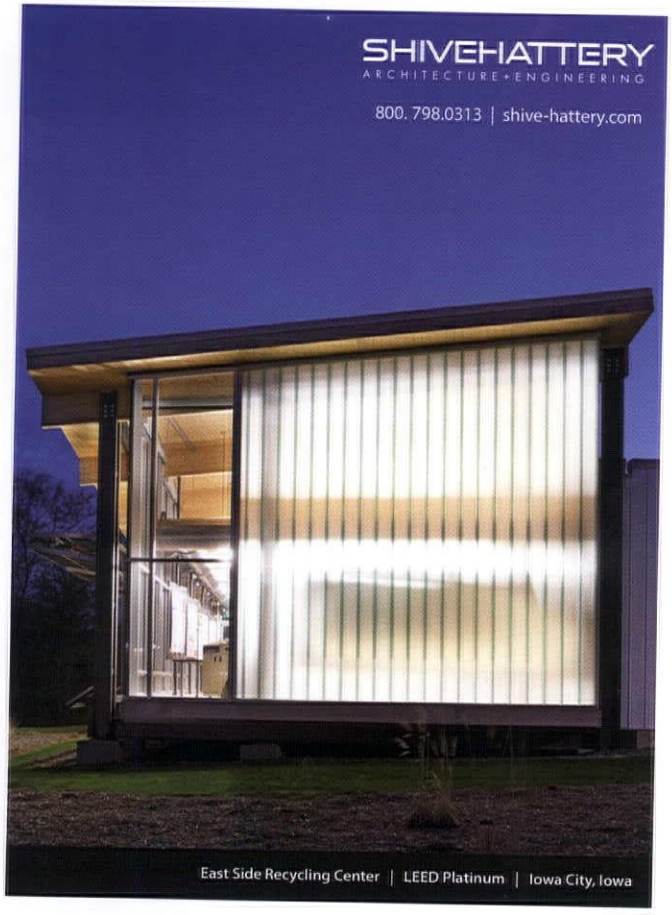

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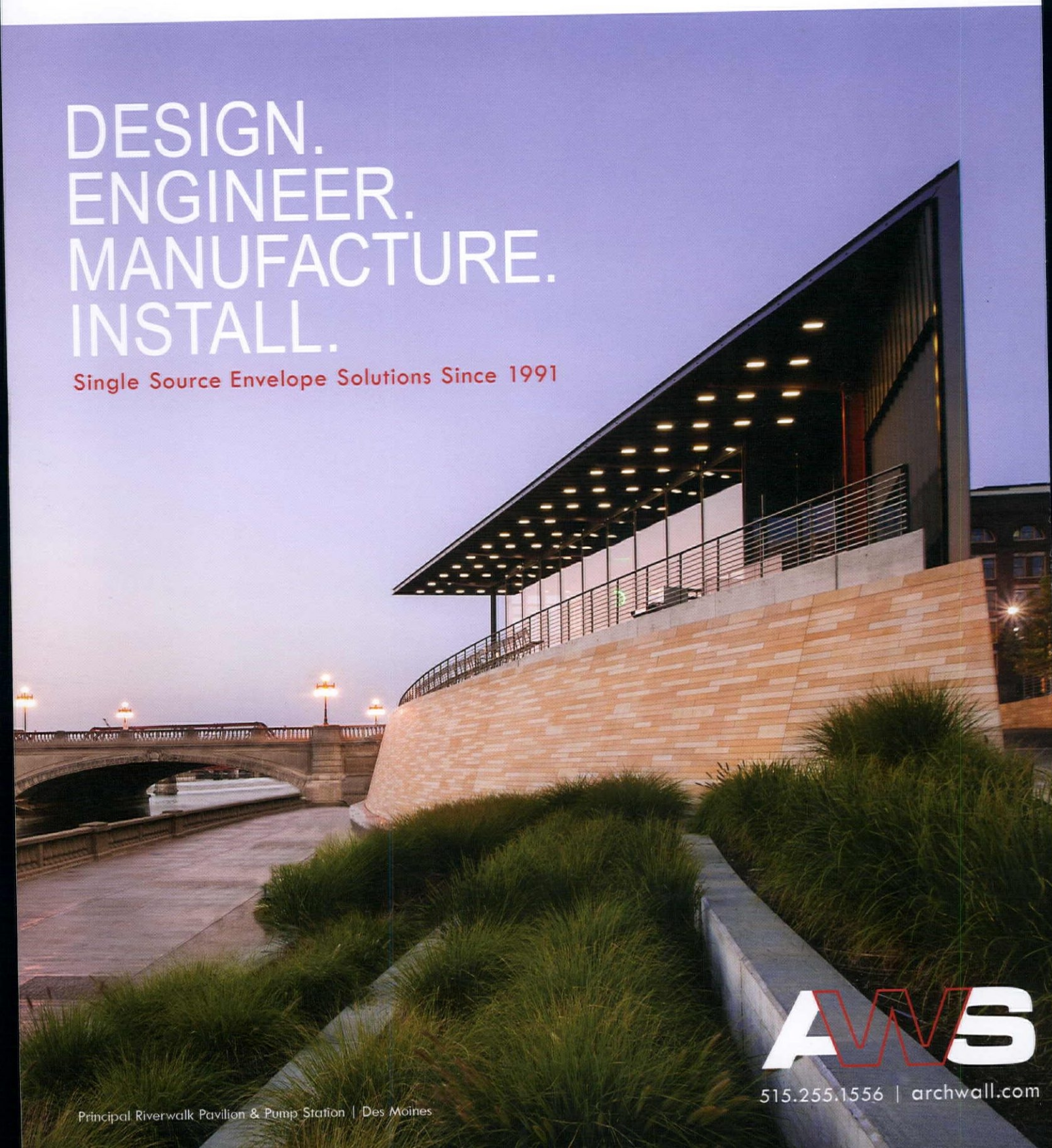
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